NATION

Army called in to douse Nainital forest fire

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BUSINESS

Govt portal offered more jobs than applied for in FY24

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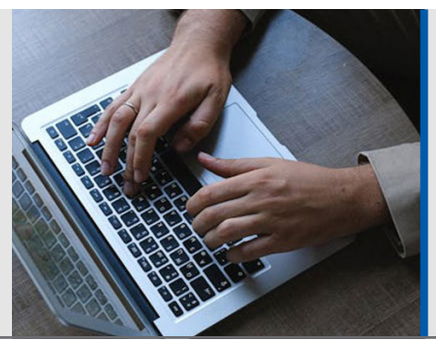

SPORTS

McGurk and Stubbs rock as DC beat MI by 10 runs

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DIGITAL ENGLISH DAILY, BENGALURU

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CM fumes as Centre gives ₹3.4Kcr drought aid to K'taka

Karnataka had moved SC seeking ₹18,000 cr as relief aid

KALABURAGI, 27 APRIL

Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Saturday said the Centre has approved Rs 3,499 crore as drought relief and released only Rs 3,454 crore. He urged Prime Minister Narendra Modi to give the balance amount as soon as possible.

He thanked the Supreme Court for warning the Central government and providing some drought relief to the state.

He added that it was perhaps the first time in the history of India that a state was driven to the Supreme Court to get its rights enforced.

"According to the National Disaster Response Fund (NDRF) rules, the state was supposed to be paid Rs 18,171 crore, but the Central government has only approved Rs 3,498.98 crore. This money is not sufficient for the drought relief. Our fight for the arrears will continue," he told reporters here.

He said that the Union government did not give the drought relief fund out of concern for Karnataka but it was forced to release money after the State approached Supreme Court.

"The Supreme Court, which heard this petition, was convinced that the Centre was doing injustice to Karnataka due to political reasons," Siddaramaiah alleged.

"The office of the Home Minister finally woke up after the Supreme Court rang the bell. Finally, some justice has been done to our farmers. However, the sanction is woefully inadequate," he said.

During the hearing, the Centre promised to the Supreme Court that the drought relief would be given within a week.

Neither the BJP leaders nor the Central government have any role in this. This is the result of Supreme Court's concerns for the agriculture sector and the farmers of the State, he claimed."The reason for announcing the grant was the fear that if some relief is not given, the people of State who are drought-hit will not allow BJP leaders to enter the State for the campaign. ," he said.

He also requested the Centre to rectify the injustice in tax devolution. Siddaramaiah said the State had declared 223 taluks as drought affected on 13 September, 2023. It has been seven months now. Crop damage has been reported at 48 lakh hectares and this resulted in a loss of Rs 35,162 crore, he said. —*PTI*

Siddaramaiah said it was the first time in the history that a state was driven to Supreme Court to get its rights enforced **PHOTO: PTI**

Cong to protest against 'paltry' drought relief

Bengaluru, 27 April

Karnataka Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar on Saturday said the Congress will stage a demonstration on Sunday here against the 'paltry' drought relief given by the Centre to the state. Shivakumar, who is also Congress State president, said against the demand for Rs 18,172 crore to mitigate drought in the state, the Centre has sanctioned only Rs 3,454 crore. —*PTI*

> **The funds are very meagre, which is a 'pittance' and 'not even one fourth of the State's request for release of Rs 18,172 crore.**
>
> —Siddaramaiah, Chief Minister

AFTER EVM VANDALISM

Chamarajanagar booth to re-poll on Monday

At least 15 women and 10 men were sent to judicial custody **PHOTO: PTI**

CHAMARAJANAGAR, 27 APRIL

A re-polling will be conducted at a polling station at Indiganatta village in Chamarajanagar Parliamentary constituency in the State on 29 April after Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs) were damaged in a clash between two groups, Election Commission said.

The re-polling for 528 eligible voters at polling station number 146 under Hanur Assembly constituency voters will be held from 7am to 6pm on Monday. Only nine people could cast votes on the Lok Sabha elections held at Indiganatta Government Junior Primary School on Friday because of the clashes.

The villagers had earlier in the day decided to boycott the polls citing lack of adequate infrastructure development, according to district administration. However, after assurances by local officials, polling was underway. One of the groups wanted to vote while the other was keen to boycott, leading to clashes between them during which they tried to set EVMs on fire, and also indulged in stone-pelting of the polling booth, officials said.

District Election Officer CT Shilpa Nag and General Observer Partha Gupta submitted a report to Election Commission. Acting upon this report, Election Commission issued a letter to State Chief Electoral Officer, announcing its decision to conduct re-polling under Section 58 (2) and 58 A (2) of Representation of People Act.

25 arrested for vandalism

As many as 15 women and 10 men were sent to judicial custody after Malemahadeshwar Hill police arrested them for alleged vandalism of the polling booth. Based on the complaints of the PRO of Indiganatta polling station, Basavanna, and Hanur Tehsildar, Guruprasad, a case was registered against over 250 individuals.

After the incident, the village was deserted as residents went hiding fearing arrest, and Assistant Superintendent of Police Udesh was camping at the site to oversee developments. Meanwhile, members of Soliga community from nearby Mendare village protested against the violence at Indiganatta village. —*Salar News*

Despite ban, govt exports 99.5KT of onion to 6 nations

NEW DELHI, 27 APRIL

Centre on Saturday said it has allowed exports of 99,500 tonnes of onions, mainly sourced from Maharashtra, to six neighbouring countries despite the ban on shipments. Centre has also allowed exports of 2,000 tonnes of white onion cultivated, especially, for export markets in the Middle East and some European countries. On 8 December, 2023, the government banned export of onions. The offer rate of NCEL to the buyers takes into account the prevailing prices in the destination market and also international and domestic markets. The quota allocated for export to the six countries is being supplied as per requisition made by the destination country. As per the data, onion production in 2023-24 (First Advance Estimates) is expected to be around 254.73 lakh tonnes compared to around 302.08 lakh tonnes last year. —*PTI*

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PHOTO: X/@YUVNIQUE

Indian crew in ship seized by Iran hope for early release

DUBAI, 27 APRIL

Iran on Saturday said the mostly Indian crew of a Portuguese-flagged ship that was seized by Iranian forces in its maritime territory two weeks ago is being granted consular access, raising hopes for their early release and extradition.

Iran's paramilitary Revolutionary Guard on 13 April seized Israeli-affiliated, Portuguese-flagged MSC Aries, a container ship, manned by a crew of 25, including 17 Indians, near the Strait of Hormuz as a result of a series of attacks between Iran and Israel. A statement from Iran's Ministry of Foreign Affairs said Portugal's newly-appointed Foreign Minister Paulo Rangel had a phone conversation with his Iranian counterpart Hossein Amirabdollahian and exchanged views on the bilateral relations & the situation in the region, with the developments in Palestine standing out in their talks. Ann Tessa Joseph, the sole woman cadet among the 17 Indian crew members of MSC Aries was released on 18 April following "concerted efforts" by the Indian mission in Tehran and the Iranian government. —*PTI*

2 CRPF personnel killed in militant attack in Manipur

IMPHAL, 27 APRIL

Two CRPF personnel were killed and two others injured as militants attacked a camp of security forces in Manipur's Bishnupur in the early hours of Saturday, police said.

The militants attacked an IRBn (India Reserve Battalion) camp at Naranseina in the Moirang police station area, they said.

"The militants fired indiscriminately from hilltops, targetting the camp. It started around 12.30 am and continued till about 2.15 am. The militants also hurled bombs, one of which exploded in the outpost of CRPF's 128 battalion," a senior police officer said.

The deceased are sub-inspector N Sarkar, a native of Assam's Kokrajhar district, and head constable Arup Saini of Bankura district in West Bengal, he said.

The injured were inspector Jadav Das and constable Aftab Das, he said, adding that they received splinter wounds.

The CRPF personnel were deployed to provide security to the IRBn camp.

A massive search was underway to find the perpetrators of the attack, police said.

Meanwhile, security advisor to Manipur government Kuldiep Singh on Saturday issued a stern warning to the group responsible for the attack .

Singh added, "Starting today, we have instructed all security forces, including Assam Rifles and the army, to intensify operations. We are formulating strategies for day-to-day operations."

Reacting to recent IED explosion that damaged a bridge in Kangpokpi district, Singh expressed concern over attacks on national infrastructure and central forces. —*PTI*

The militants attacked an IRBn camp at Naranseina **PHOTO: PTI**

> "The militants fired indiscriminately from hilltops, targetting the camp. It started around 12.30 am and continued till about 2.15 am. The militants also hurled bombs, one of which exploded in the outpost of CRPF's 128 battalion," a senior police officer said.

MERCURY AT 44.6°C AS HEATWAVE SCORCHES ODISHA

BHUBANESWAR, 27 APRIL

With heatwave sweeping across Odisha, the mercury touched 44.6 degrees Celsius in the state capital on Saturday, the highest during this summer. Bhubaneswar day temperature touched 44.6 degrees Celsius during the day at 2.30pm, weather scientist Umashaknar Dash said. He said the temperature in Bhubaneswar crossed 44 degrees Celsius for the first time this season.

Dash said the IMD has urged people not to come out of their houses between 11am to 3pm as hot and intense humid condition prevails in most parts of the state. IMD said that Bhubaneswar was followed by Jharsuguda which recorded 43.6 degrees Celsius, Rourkela at 42.5, Chandbali 42.4 and Sambalpur 42.1 degrees Celsius. Meanwhile, IMD issued a red warning (be alert) for different areas for Saturday and said heatwave to severe heatwave conditions may prevail in Mayurbhanj, Jajpur, Keonjhar, Angul, Dhenkanal, Boudh, Sundargarh, Jharsuguda, Khurda, and Cuttack districts. Similarly, heatwave conditions will prevail in Deogarh, Sambalpur, Sonepur, Balangir, Nuapada, Kalahandi, and Kandhamal. —*PTI*

IndiGo flight returns to Delhi after technical glitch

NEW DELHI, 27 APRIL

An IndiGo aircraft enroute to Ahmedabad returned to the national capital on Saturday afternoon due to an issue with the landing gear, according to a source. The plane, operating flight 6E 129, landed safely at the Delhi airport at around 1440 hours.

There were around 170 people on board, the source said. An IndiGo spokesperson said the aircraft is currently undergoing necessary inspection, and an alternate aircraft is being provided to the passengers. The source said the plane had to return due to the landing gear issue, and that an emergency was declared for the flight. In a statement, the spokesperson said the flight returned to Delhi after take-off as the pilot noted a technical issue. —*PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

WORSENING CRISIS

Amid water crisis, people stand in long queues at drinking water kiosks to fill their cans in Bengaluru on Saturday **PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD**

CANCER-CAUSING TOXIN

US to now probe MDH, Everest spices

NEW DELHI, 27 APRIL

The US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) is gathering information on products of spice makers MDH and Everest after Hong Kong halted sales of some of their products for allegedly containing high levels of a cancer-causing pesticide.

Hong Kong this month suspended sales of three MDH spice blends and an Everest spice mix for fish curries. Singapore ordered a recall of the Everest spice mix, saying it contains high levels of ethylene oxide, which is unfit for human consumption and a cancer risk with long exposure.

PHOTO: PTI

> Hong Kong this month suspended sales of three MDH spice blends and an Everest spice mix for fish curries. Singapore ordered a recall of the Everest spice mix, saying it contains high levels of ethylene oxide, which is unfit for human consumption and a cancer risk with long exposure.

MDH and Everest spices, which are among the most popular names in India and are also sold in Europe, Asia and North America, are also under the Indian regulator's scanner for quality standards, following Hong Kong and Singapore's moves.

Meanwhile, India, the world's largest producer, consumer and exporter of spices, has sought details from food safety regulators of Singapore and Hong Kong.

The commerce ministry has also directed Indian embassies in both Singapore and Hong Kong to send a detailed report on the matter.

Food safety regulator FSSAI had also started taking samples of spices in powder form of all brands, including MDH and Everest, from across the country after the ban.

In 2019, a few batches of MDH's products were recalled in the U.S. for salmonella contamination. —*Agencies*

City will never go thirsty if it uses treated waste water: Experts

BENGALURU, 27 APRIL

Back in 2016, Centre for Ecological Sciences (CES) of Indian Institute of Science, Bengaluru, figured a way for the IT hub to stay water surplus. On an average, 20.05 TMC (thousand million cubic feet) of water is required every year for domestic purposes, CES's technical report established. Of which about 16.04 TMC, about 80 per cent, could be met just by treating sewage water, suggested the report. Add to this, the rain yield, which is about 14.80TMC a year and Bengaluru could easily meet its water needs, the report stated.

Cut to 2023. Some apartment owners of Emmanuel Heights in Hosa Road, Sarjapur, proposed setting up a sewage treatment plant in October. Little did they know that it would take them almost six months to convince the others.

S Vishwanath, Bengaluru's go-to man for water conservancy and director of Biome Environmental Solutions is a long-time advocate of treated wastewater for drinking. According to him, it is now all in the mind, as science has already shown that it is perfectly fine to drink treated wastewater.

Little over 10 days ago, investment whiz Nithin Kamath, founder and CEO of Zerodha and Rainmatter Foundation, propped up Boson White Water, a Bengaluru-based firm that converts wastewater into potable water, stating that wastewater could be the part of the solution for Bengaluru's water shortage crisis, on X. Although some agreed with him, most were repulsed by the idea of drinking water that was once sewage.

- On an average, 20.05 TMC (thousand million cubic feet) of water is required ,of which 16.04 TMC, about 80 per cent, could be met just by treating sewage water, suggested the report

Replying to Kamath, people started saying, without any scientific backing, that treated water will have heavy metals or hormones and therefore is unfit for consumption. The concern also stemmed from the perception that sewage treatment plants are run in a very bad way.

Vikas Brahmavar, one of the founders of the start-up Boson White Water, said they were deluged with calls after their promotional video forwarded by Kamath went viral.

But Brahmavar said most of it again was attempts to reiterate that wastewater, treated or not, is smelly and dirty.

Vishwanath said people are also not realising that treated wastewater is already being consumed indirectly.

He pointed out to the Lakshmi Sagara lake in Kolar, which is the first of 82 lakes in Kolar and Chikkaballapur districts to be filled with treated wastewater from an STP, as part of Koramangala-Challaghatta (KC) Valley project, in which the government plans to fill 134 lakes at the cost of Rs 1,342 crore. *—PTI*

B'luru firm can convert wastewater to potable water **PHOTO: PIXABAY**

PHOTO: PTI

IT officials seize Rs 2 crore ahead of Phase 3 polls

KALABURAGI, 27 APRIL

The Income Tax officials seized Rs 2 crore during a raid at Kalaburagi railway station on Saturday. A man who was suspected to have gotten off the train with a bag was stopped by the officials while he was leaving in a car. During the investigation, the seized cash, along with the vehicle was believed to be associated with a former mayor of Congress party. The raid coincides with the upcoming polling scheduled for 7 May in 14 Lok Sabha constituencies across North Karnataka, including Kalaburagi. Additionally, the residence of Congress MP DK Suresh was subjected to IT scrutiny in recent days, further emphasising the comprehensive nature of the on-going investigations. *—Salar News*

EC junks 'non-activation of ballot' report in Shantinagar

'The correct position has been outlined after due enquiry'

BENGALURU, 27 APRIL

Election Commission has dismissed as "incorrect and baseless" reports alleging non-activation of a ballot unit by a polling official in a polling booth in Shantinagar, Bengaluru during Lok Sabha elections on Friday.

"Reports of alleged non-activation of a ballot unit by a polling official in a polling booth in Shantinagar in Bengaluru, circulating on social media & WhatsApp as an audio message are incorrect & baseless. The correct position has been outlined below by DEO, after due enquiry," Election Commission said in a post on X.

District Election Officer also confirmed the same.

District Election officer also confirmed the same **PHOTO: PTI**

"Complaint of not activating the BALLOT button of the Control Unit at the time of casting the vote on Ballot Unit in Booth No.17, 163-Shantinagar-Reg. Upon receipt of the complaint, the Assistant Returning Officer, 163- Shantinagar Assembly, has directed the Sector Magistrate to immediately reach the polling station and report the issue. It was found that the total entries in register 17A and the Control Unit perfectly tallied, indicating that no such case of non-activation of BALLOT button has been reported from the said polling station," Bengaluru District Election Officer said in a post on X on Friday. *–ANI*

- Reports of alleged non-activation of a ballot unit by a polling official in a polling booth in Shantinagar in Bengaluru, are incorrect & baseless

HEAT & HOPE

IMD warns of scorching temp, possible relief

BENGALURU, 27 APRIL

As rainfall diminishes across Karnataka, dry weather becomes the norm in most regions of the State. According to Indian Meteorological Department (IMD), regions including Raichur, Yadgir, Kalaburagi, and Vijayapura are set to experience scorching heat between 27 and 30 April, with temperatures soaring to alarming levels.

However, IMD forecasts light rainfall in several districts from 30 April to 3 May, offering potential relief from the scorching temperatures in Bengaluru Urban, Vijayapura, and Hassan.

IMD's predicts thundershowers in Belagavi and Chamarajanagar on Friday.

In Bengaluru, multiple weather models converge on the possibility of rain showers gracing the City and its surrounding areas in early May.

A Prasad, a scientist at IMD, stated "While temperatures may continue to rise during the day, there is a likelihood of significant rainfall in the afternoons and evenings from the second week of May over interior parts of Tamil Nadu, Western Ghats, and interior parts of Karnataka."

Karnataka residents are urged to take necessary precautions to safeguard against the adverse effects of extreme heat. *—Salar News*

ALL SET FOR RESULTS

PHOTO: PTI

Yatnal accuses DKS, Priyank of planning his arrest

YADGIRI, 27 APRIL

BJP MLA Basangouda Patil Yatnal on Saturday accused Congress leaders DK Shivakumar and Priyank Kharge of plotting his arrest to silence him. He addressed reporters during a roadshow in support of BJP candidate Raja Amareshwara Naik in Shahapur, Yatnal, said he would disclose after 7 May the intensity of the alleged plot against him. Accusing the Congress of betraying Dalits and backward communities, Yatnal criticised the allocation of OBC reservation to Muslims, which according to him, violates the principles outlined in the Constitution. "After coming to power for the third time, we will remove the Muslim reservation and distribute it to the backward Dalits," he declared. Yatnal criticised the Congress' proposed property survey, alleging that it aims to seize 55 per cent of inherited property. "Breaking tradition and giving share in Muslim property is like what Congress is doing," he said. *—Salar News*

Clockwise from left: EVMs being shifted to a strong room at SSMRV College, Jayanagar; Strong rooms being sealed by on duty election officers at Mount Carmel College in Bengaluru on Saturday **PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD**

MODI RUINED DIGNITY OF PM POST: CM

KALABURAGI, 27 APRIL

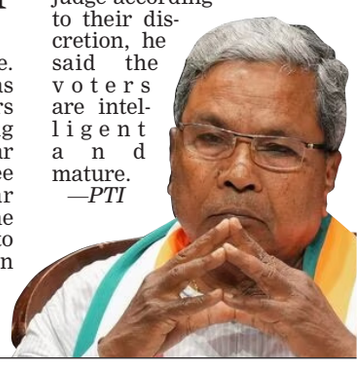
Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Saturday said Narendra Modi has undermined the dignity of Prime Minister's post with lies and inflaming people's sentiments.

"Narendra Modi is very good at lying. They have marketed lies. He is trying to harm the dignity of people by saying irrelevant things, inflaming people's feelings, polarising them, which undermines the dignity of the post of Prime Minister," Siddaramaiah said, while addressing a press conference. He said Congress has complained about this to Election Commission.

"We have complained to Election Commission regarding his speeches on reservation and 'Mangalsutra' issues. No action has been taken yet. Notice has been given to them. We look forward to taking action, Siddaramaiah said.

Regarding the ruling Congress' poll prospects in Karnataka, he said the party expects a good show given the success of five guarantees.

"Stating that people will judge according to their discretion, he said the voters are intelligent and mature. *—PTI*



HDK a traitor for saying drought relief is enough: DK Shivakumar

BENGALURU, 27 APRIL

Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar on Saturday called former chief minister HD Kumaraswamy a traitor for saying the paltry drought relief given by Centre was enough for Karnataka.

The drought caused extensive damage to agricultural and horticultural sectors of the State, Shivakumar said at a press conference at Karnataka Pradesh Congress Committee office here.

The State government made multiple appeals and government officials made several visits to Delhi.

"Kumaraswamy's assertion that it was enough is a betrayal to Karnataka. The State is not his private property to decide the adequacy of relief." He said the Karnataka government had requested relief amounting to Rs 18,172 crores, based on National Disaster Response Fund guidelines.

The Centre's allocation of Rs 3,454 crore fell significantly short of this figure. The Deputy Chief Minister said: "Our government declared 223 taluks as drought-hit on 13 September, 2023. Drought has affected crops in 46 lakh hectares of agricultural land and 2.06 lakh hectares of horticultural land. The total damage to the crops was estimated at Rs 35,000 crore."

Expressing dissatisfaction with the Centre's response, Shivakumar announced plans for a protest near Gandhi statue at Vidhana Soudha here. The press conference was attended by party members including KPCC Working President GC Chandrashekar and Campaign Committee President Vinay Kumar Sorake. Shivakumar said he will tour North Karnataka to oversee election responsibilities.

—Salar News

PM bent on 'revenge' since loss in K'taka: Congress

NEW DELHI, 27 APRIL

Congress on Saturday alleged that Prime Minister Narendra Modi has been hell-bent on taking "revenge" on the people of Karnataka since they "decisively rejected" him in the 2023 assembly elections.

The Opposition party's attack came after Centre approved about Rs 3,499 crore as drought relief to Karnataka following the state government taking the matter to Supreme Court.

Congress General Secretary Jairam Ramesh said in a post on X, "Ever since Mr Modi was rejected decisively by the people of Karnataka in the 2023 assembly elections, he has been hell-bent on taking his revenge."

First, Modi tried to "sabotage" the Anna Bhagya food security scheme but the Congress government was unshaken and launched direct cash transfer scheme for the 4.49 crore beneficiaries.

Narendra Modi **PHOTO: PTI**

"Second, he cut off funds to Karnataka. Between April 2023 - Third, the Centre delayed the legitimate drought relief funds due to the farmers of the state, Ramesh further claimed. *—PTI*

PROTRACTED BATTLE

Depositors of Raghavendra bank await justice

MEGHANA PRASAD
BENGALURU, 18 APRIL

As the shadows of a financial scandal continue to loom over Sri Guru Raghavendra Sahakara Bank in Basavanagudi, depositors find themselves ensnared in a protracted battle for justice. Since Reserve Bank of India (RBI) imposed withdrawal restrictions on the bank in 2020, more than 15,000 depositors with deposits exceeding Rs 6 lakh remain uncompensated. In February, Enforcement Directorate told the jurisdictional court that it found no documents for over 2,000 loans amounting to Rs 1,544 crore.

The genesis of the scandal dates back to 2020 when Enforcement Directorate discovered the fraudulent activities in the bank. Officers and employees were accused of siphoning off funds through fictitious loan accounts, deceptive practices.

V Harish, General Secretary of the closed bank, told Salar News "A total of 43,000 people deposited money in the bank. Of these, 32,000 of them got their deposits back which leaves 11,000 more to get their money back. They are stuck, uncertain if they ever reclaim their hard-earned savings."

For depositors like Kavita Rao, who had deposited her life savings in the bank, the ordeal has been particularly agonising. "I worked tirelessly for years to build up my savings, only to see it vanish into thin air. It's heartbreaking," she said. Other depositors have expressed their frustration as none of the government bodies have come to their aid. "Promises were made by both Congress and BJP, but till now none of the action has been taken," Harish said.

RBI imposed withdrawal restrictions in 2020 and more than 15,000 depositors remain uncompensated **PHOTO: INDIATIMES**

For many senior citizens, the fight for justice is filled with hurdles. "We are not in a position to protest on the streets. All we can do is hope and pray for a resolution," said Ramesh Kumar, a retired government employee who is yet to receive his savings.

While the decision to transfer the probe CBI offered a glimmer of hope, the absence of a designated investigation officer underscores the challenges ahead.

—Salar News

PHOTO: PTI

Didi injured while boarding chopper in Durgapur

DURGAPUR, 27 APRIL

West Bengal Mamata Banerjee suffered a minor injury on Saturday after she slipped and fell while taking her seat after boarding a helicopter in Durgapur. The Chief Minister had reportedly suffered a minor injury and was helped by her security personnel. Visuals of the incident showed her climbing the steps to the helicopter, and slipping while inside the chopper. Her security personnel quickly assisted her. Banerjee proceeded with her scheduled trip to Asansol after receiving first aid.Earlier, this March, the West Bengal Chief Minister sustained a 'major injury' on her forehead.The All India Trinamool Congress had shared photos of Banerjee on a hospital bed with a deep cut in the middle of her forehead and blood on her face.*—PTI*

Large number of Sikhs join BJP in Delhi

NEW DELHI, 27 APRIL

A large number of Sikhs, including members of the Delhi Sikh Gurudwara Management Committee, joined the BJP on Saturday. Citing a host of measures taken by the government to help the minority community, BJP president JP Nadda on the occasion said if anybody has really worked for the community, it is Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Nadda also cited central government decisions such as the opening of the Kartarpur Sahib corridor, the FCRA registration for donations to the Golden Temple and the action against accused in the 1984 anti-Sikh riot cases. He said the BJP highly regarded the contribution and sacrifices of the community for the country and will work for its welfare. A number of well known Sikh politicians from the state have joined the party recently.*—PTI*

BJP names 8 more candidates for Odisha polls

BHUBANESWAR, 27 APRIL

The BJP on Saturday announced the names of eight more candidates for the assembly polls in Odisha, with four of them being former members of the ruling BJD who switched allegiance to the saffron party recently. These turncoats are Seemarani Nayak (Hindol), Arindam Roy (Salipur), Geetanjali Sethi (Kendrapara), and Prasant Jagdev (Khurda). Jagdev, formerly a BJD MLA from Chilika, was ousted from the party before he joined the BJP. Roy is a popular Odia actor. The remaining candidates announced by the party are Fakir Mohan Naik (Telkoi), Murali Manohar Sharma (Champua), Rabindra Andia (Basta), and Banikalyan Mohanty (Basudevpur).*—PTI*

BJP, Akali Dal's SC wing leaders join AAP

CHANDIGARH, 27 APRIL

BJP's OBC Morcha secretary, an Akali Dal leader and NSUI's Punjab vice-president on Saturday here joined the AAP in the presence of Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann amid the on-going Lok Sabha elections. Kuldeep Singh Shanty, secretary of BJP's other backward classes (OBC) Morcha, and Gurdarshan Lal, general secretary, scheduled castes (SC) wing (Doaba), Shiromani Akali Dal, were welcomed into the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) fold by Mann, according to a party statement. AAP's Jalandhar Lok Sabha candidate Pawan Kumar Tinu and senior party leader Rajwinder Kaur Thiara were present during their joining ceremony. Mann said people from every section of Punjab are joining the AAP as they are impressed by the work of the AAP government.*—PTI*

Congress says CPI(M) hijacked EVMs in Kerala

Cong was also confident of a good show in phase 2 polls

T'PURAM, 27 APRIL

A day after polling concluded for the 20 Lok Sabha seats in Kerala, the Congress on Saturday alleged that voters were harassed and the election machinery was hijacked by the ruling CPI(M) in the state with an aim to bring down the turnout percentage.

The Congress was also confident of a good show in the phase 2 polls held in 13 states for 88 Lok Sabha seats, saying that the artificial hype created by Narendra Modi of a pro-BJP wave has been demolished.

AICC general secretary KC Venugopal said that post the first two phases of polling in the country, the Congress workers of all the states, where elections were held, are confident of a good outcome.

"Even in Kerala we are confident of winning all 20 Lok Sabha seats," he said.

While exuding confidence about a good show in the polls held in the southern state, Venugopal said that the alleged hijacking of the election machinery by the ruling CPI(M) was one of the reasons for the decrease in polling percentage in Kerala this year as compared to the turnout in the 2019 Lok Sabha polls.

Despite heightened political fervour and anticipation about the general elections for the 20 Lok Sabha seats in Kerala, the process concluded with a notable decrease in voter turnout, as the figure stood at 70.22 per cent.

This figure, while significant, was quite a drop from the polling percentage of 77.84 per cent registered in the 2019 Lok Sabha polls.

Venugopal claimed that there were glitches in electronic voting machines (EVMs) in three to five per cent of the polling booths in the state that lead to long delays in the election process which in turn caused discomfort to the voters who had to stand in long queues for hours in the intense heat.

The senior Congress leader, speaking at a press conference here, alleged that 90 per cent of such EVM glitches occurred in booths where the UDF was strong.

"The election machinery was completely hijacked by the CPI(M) with the aim of bringing down the polling percentage," he alleged.

Besides that, the Congress leader further alleged that there was large-scale bogus voting in several parts of the state and UDF leaders and workers who questioned it were attacked by Left activists. *—ANI*

Electronic Voting Machines and other material at a distribution centre on the eve of the second phase of general elections in Ajmer *PHOTO: PTI*

- The senior Congress leader, speaking at a press conference here, alleged that 90 per cent of such EVM glitches occurred in booths where the UDF was strong

JAYARAJAN MEETS JAVADEKAR: CONG SEEKS EXPLANATION

T'PURAM/KANNUR, 27 APRIL

The controversy arising out of the charges levelled against LDF convener EP Jayarajan that he planned to join the BJP, refused to die down on Saturday with the Congress demanding that the CPI(M) leadership explain why he met BJP leader Prakash Javadekar.

Dismissing the allegations, the Left party said it was a ploy of the Congress party to hide its embarrassment over party leaders joining the BJP enmasse.Senior BJP leader Shoba Surendran had alleged that a middleman tried to help Jayarajan "who expressed interest to join the BJP". On the day of the election, Congress chief K Sudhakaran and Leader of Opposition in the state Assembly, VD Satheesan had attacked the LDF convener saying there was a secret understanding between the BJP and the CPI(M).

Satheesan said the CM had defended the meeting between Jayarajan and Javadekar.

Satheesan also raised suspicion over whether Jayarajan was acting as a "bridge between the Chief Minister and the BJP" to settle the cases against Vijayan. *—PTI*

MAMATA SPEAKS UP

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee addresses a public meeting for Lok Sabha elections, in Asansol, on Saturday *PHOTO: PTI*

'CBI may have brought arms to Sandeshkhali'

KULTI/ USHAGRAM, 27 APRIL

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Saturday said there was "no evidence" of arms seizure in Sandeshkhali, asserting that CBI teams conducted searches without informing the state police.

She expressed skepticism regarding the operations, stating that the recovered items "might have been brought by officials of the central agency".

"If a firecracker goes off in Bengal, the NIA, CBI, NSG are coming to investigate. It seems that a war is going on. The state police were not informed. It is not known what was found. There was no evidence. The seized items might have been brought by them (CBI) in a car," Banerjee said here.

She was addressing an election rally for TMC's Asansol Lok Sabha candidate Shatrughan Sinha.

The CBI on Friday seized arms and ammunition, including a police service revolver and foreign-made firearms, during searches at two premises of Shajahan Sheikh in Sandeshkhali, officials said. *—PTI*

TMC DEMANDS CBI INTERVENTION IN HASNABAD BLAST

NEW DELHI, 22 APRIL

The Trinamool Congress (TMC) on Saturday alleged that several people were injured after a powerful bomb went off at the house of a relative of a BJP leader in West Bengal's Basirhat assembly constituency.

TMC leader Kunal Ghosh alleged that the explosion tore apart the roof of the house belonging to a relative of BJP leader Nimai Das in Hasnabad panchayat area, leaving several people injured. He questioned why the CBI or the NSG shouldn't intervene to investigate the incident.

Ghosh claimed Das was often seen with senior BJP functionaries such as BL Santosh during public events of the saffron camp.

We demand that Das should be immediately taken into c ustody for interrogation, Ghosh said. *—PTI*

SUPPORT FOR AAP

Standing through the sunroof of a vehicle, Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal's wife Sunita Kejriwal greets voters in the Kondli area of East Delhi constituency in her maiden roadshow on Saturday *PHOTO: PTI*

Kejriwal to SC: ED acted in 'high handed' manner

NEW DELHI, 27 APRIL

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Saturday told the Supreme Court that the Enforcement Directorate (ED) has acted in a "most high-handed manner" in a money-laundering case stemming from the alleged excise policy scam.

In a rejoinder to the ED's reply affidavit filed on his petition challenging his arrest in the case, Kejriwal said he has always cooperated with the investigation.

The AAP leader said the ED, in its reply affidavit filed in the apex court, has said that one of the reasons which necessitated his arrest was that he did not remain present before the investigating officer (IO) despite being summoned nine times.

Kejriwal said the ED has said in its reply that in such a case, the IO was justified in forming an opinion that custodial interrogation would lead to "a qualitatively more elicitation orientated" questioning of the accused.

Kejriwal further claimed that a cumulative reading of the ED's stand in its reply would expose the "bogey and blatant falsehood" in the conduct of its proceedings.

He said the record would reveal that each and every summons issued to him was duly responded to while seeking vital details and information, which under no circumstances can be claimed to be privileged or confidential by the ED. Kejriwal claimed that the ED has never spelt out the alleged non-cooperation by him. *—PTI*

Never opposed ban on PFI, says Digvijaya Singh

BHOPAL, 27 APRIL

Senior Congress leader Digvijaya Singh on Saturday rejected Union Home Minister Amit Shah's allegation that he had opposed the ban on the Popular Front of India and instead accused the BJP of contesting polls in Karnataka in alliance with PFI's political unit.

Singh, the Congress candidate from Rajgarh Lok Sabha constituency in Madhya Pradesh, also countered Shah's allegation concerning theStudents' Islamic Movement of India (SIMI), saying he had banned the outfit when was MP's chief minister.

Singh said Shah took his name 17 times and spoke lies about him eight times. *—PTI*

LDF MAN BOOKED OVER REMARK ON RAHUL GANDHI

PALAKKAD, 27 APRIL

LDF MLA PV Anwar has been booked for the penal offence of promoting enmity between different groups due to his remarks that Congress leader Rahul Gandhi was a "fourth-grade citizen" and that his DNA should be examined.

Anwar, while addressing an election meeting in Palakkad district of Kerala on 22 April, had also said that the Congress leader does not deserve to be called by the surname of Gandhi.

Following the incident, a case was registered at Nattukal police station against the LDF MLA on Friday, 26 April, on the directions of a magisterial court, according to the First Information Report (FIR).

Anwar has been booked for the offences under section 153A (promoting enmity between different groups) of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) and section 125 (promoting enmity between classes in connection with election) of the Representation of People Act. *—PTI*

YSRCP releases manifesto, promises pension

AMARAVATI, 27 APRIL

YSRCP chief YS Jagan Mohan Reddy on Saturday released the party manifesto for the coming elections and promised to gradually hike welfare pensions from Rs 3,000 to Rs 3,500 per month and govern the state from Visakhapatnam.

The Chief Minister noted that welfare pensions, which are currently at Rs 3,000 per month, will be raised to Rs 3,250 from January 2028 and subsequently to Rs 3,500 from January 2029.

"Immediately after YSRCP forms the government in 2024,

PHOTO: PTI

Visakhapatnam will be made the executive capital as the seat of the government. It will be developed as the growth engine for the state," said Reddy, addressing a press conference.

Further, he vowed that Amaravati will be developed as the legislative capital and Kurnool as the judicial capital.

Continuing almost all the schemes introduced in the past five years, Reddy has also raised the financial outlay for some schemes such as Amma Vodi, which has been hiked from Rs 15,000 per annum to Rs 17,000.

The YSRCP chief insisted that a political party's manifesto assumed its real meaning only in his government,

- Continuing almost all the schemes introduced in the past five years, Reddy has also raised the financial outlay for some schemes such as Amma Vodi, which has been hiked from Rs 15,000 per annum to Rs 17,000

which treated it as a holy book like the Bible, Quran and Bhagavad Gita.

Assembly elections will be held simultaneously with the Lok Sabha polls in Andhra Pradesh on 13 May. *—PTI*

CONSTITUTION ROW

'BJP will change Constitution'

DHARAMPUR, 27 APRIL

Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi on Saturday claimed that the ruling BJP's top leadership may be pretending to be in denial mode now, but the party will change the Constitution if it returns to power.

Targeting Prime Minister Narendra Modi over inflation, she called him a "mehengai" man.

"BJP leaders and candidates are saying that they will change the Constitution. But Prime Minister Narendra Modi is denying it. This is their tactic," she said at a public rally at Dharampur village of tribal-dominated Valsad district held in support of Congress candidate for ST-reserved Valsad Lok Sabha seat, Anant Patel. "First, they will always deny what they want to do. But after coming to power, they will implement it.

Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi on Saturday addressing a public rally in Valsad *PHOTO: PTI*

They want to change the Constitution to weaken the common people and deprive them of their rights given in our Constitution," said the Congress leader. She claimed that the tribal population in Gujarat, which is Modi's home state, and in the country is suffering due to issues like inflation, unemployment, low remuneration, loss of land, violence against women and other atrocities. She also said that the Congress is committed to filling about 30 lakh vacancies in government jobs, providing subsidised diesel to fishermen, taking minimum wage to Rs 400, working out "sub-plans" for Scheduled Tribes and Scheduled Castes, a special budget for tribals and declaring tribal-dominated areas as scheduled areas. *—PTI*

Cong, AAP urban Naxals: Shah

BHARUCH, 27 APRIL

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Saturday said people must not make the mistake of voting for "urban Naxals" and asserted that the Congress and Aam Aadmi Party were "anti-tribals".

Addressing a rally in Gujarat's Bharuch Lok Sabha constituency, where the AAP has fielded a candidate as part of its alliance with the Congress, he urged the people to vote for BJP's sitting MP Mansukh Vasava.

"The Congress and AAP have come together to loot people. I have no hesitation in saying the Congress is an anti-tribal party and AAP will exploit tribals after getting their votes," Shah asserted.

The Congress and AAP are spreading rumours that the BJP will change the Constitution and scrap

Union Home Minister and BJP leader Amit Shah addresses a public meeting for Lok Sabha elections, in Gujarat on Saturday *PHOTO: PTI*

reservations after it wins 400 Lok Sabha seats, he said, adding the grand old party is an "expert" and the Arvind Kejriwal-led party a "sardar" (chieftain) in spreading lies.

"These two liars have come together (as part of INDI alliance) in Bharuch," Shah said and pointed out that the Narendra Modi government has been in power for the past 10 years with a clear majority and could have changed the Constitution if it had any intention to do so.

"I am here to tell you Modi's guarantee is that he will neither touch reservations for Adivasis, Dalits or OBCs nor will he allow anyone to touch it," Shah said. *—PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

1 killed, 13 injured as bus travelling to Udupi turns turtle

KOZHIKODE, 27 APRIL

One person was killed and 13 others injured when a tourist bus lost control and turned turtle in this district early on Saturday, police said. The incident occurred when the bus was proceeding to Udupi in neighbouring Karnataka from Thiruvananthapuram. "The driver might have dozed off at the wheel. It was a slope and the bus went down after losing control," a police officer said. The deceased man got trapped beneath the vehicle and his life could not be saved though he was rushed to a nearby hospital, they added *—PTI*

14-year-old girl abducted, raped in UP

MUZAFFARNAGAR, 27 APRIL

A 14-year-old girl was allegedly abducted and raped by a man here, police said on Saturday. According to a complaint filed by the girl's family, the minor was abducted by Majid on Friday and taken to a nearby fields where he raped her. The accused threatened the girl but she informed her family about the incident when she somehow managed to reach home, Charthawal police station circle officer Raju Sav. A case under sections 363 (kidnapping), 376 (rape), 506 (criminal intimidation) of the IPC and POCSO Act has been registered against Majid, who is at large, he said. The girl has been sent for a medical examination, he said. *—PTI*

UP woman, son end life over financial issues

ETAWAH, 27 APRIL

A 55-year-old woman and her son died after allegedly consuming some poisonous substance over financial issues, police said on Saturday.Deepak Kumar alias Deepu Soni,28, and his mother Suman Devi,55, consumed some poisonous substance after mixing it with a soft drink in their house in Nai Basti Sai Colony on Friday night, Additional Superintendent of Police (City) Abhay Nath Tripathi said. The incident came to light when Suman Devi's daughter called her this morning to enquire about their well-being and informed the neighbours when the phone went unanswered, police said. After failing to get a response, the neighbours informed the police. Station in-charge Bhimsen Pauniya reached the spot and broke the door of the house to find the dead bodies in a room, they said.A soft drink bottle and an empty bottle of sulfas was also found lying nearby, they said. According to the family members, Suman Devi and Deepak were facing financial problems.*—PTI*

Assam: 3 killed, 1 injured in wild elephant attacks

TEZPUR, 27 APRIL

Three perople, including two forest guards, were killed and another person was injured in an attack by a wild elephant in Assam's Sonitpur district on Saturday, a forest official said. A wild elephant strayed into Dhirai Majuli village from nearby Dhekiajuli forest and trampled three people to death on the spot and injured another employee of the forest department, when the forest personnel were patrolling the area, West Tezpur Divisional Forest Officer Nipen Kalita said. The deceased have been identified as forest guards Koleswar Boro and Biren Rava, and the local person as Jatin Tanti, he said, adding the injured person, Dibakar Malakar, has been admitted to a hospital and his condition is stated to be critical. Efforts are underway to push back the elephant into the forest, he added. *—PTI*

Army called in to douse Nainital forest fire

The blaze has been burning for over 36 hours

DEHRADUN, 27 APRIL

Uttarakhand Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami on Saturday said that the Indian Army and Air Force helicopters are assisting in controlling forest fires in the state that have reached Nainital after raging for over 36 hours and burning several hectares of green cover.

Dhami said today that the fire poses a substantial challenge and that all necessary resources are being mobilised to address the situation.

A massive fire broke out in Ladiyakata area of the Nainital Air Force Centre on Friday. The blaze has been burning for over 36 hours, sweeping through dense forests in the mountainous region.

The district administration has also deployed helicopters in the fire-fighting operations.

"The forest fires are a challenge for us. This is a big fire. We are working for all the essential needs. We have asked for help from the Army. Army helicopters are also spraying water in the affected area," Dhami told ANI.

"I am going to conduct a meeting in Haldwani today. We have conducted a meeting in Dehradun also regarding this. We will try to control the fire as soon as possible," he added.

A massive fire broke out in Ladiyakata area of the Nainital Air Force Centre on Friday PHOTO: PTI

The Indian Air Force (IAF) has deployed MI-17 helicopters to assist in the firefighting efforts. These helicopters are pulling water from Nainital Lake to douse the flames, resulting in a temporary halt to boating activities on the lake.

"We received information of IAF helicopters seeking permission to take water from Nainital to douse the fire. To make arrangements, we closed boating in the lake for the day. Fire is reported in Nainital in many places, including very close to the Air Force Station in the district," Rahul Anand, Executive Officer of the Nainital Municipal Corporation said.

"The main purpose of bringing in helicopters to douse the fire was to keep the Air Force Station safe. The situation is under control now. Efforts are continuing," he said.

According to the official, the IAF choppers conducted aerial surveys over Nainital, Bhimtal, and Sattal lakes, identifying suitable locations from where it could lift water for the dousing operation. The choppers, with sacks and buckets hanging by a rope from them, were spraying water over the affected forests surrounding Nainital, till last reports. *—ANI*

Former Panchayat member hacked to death in Dantewada

DANTEWADA, 27 APRIL

A former member of Janpad Panchayat was allegedly hacked to death with sharp weapons by unidentified assailants at a village in Chhattisgarh's Naxalite-hit Dantewada district, police said on Saturday.

Police suspect that Naxalites were behind the murder that occurred late Friday night, but no Maoist pamphlets were found at the spot.

Investigation is underway into all possible angles, including personal enmity, they said.

The incident took place in Potali village under Aranpur police station limits when the victim, identified as Joga Podiyam, a former member of the local janpad panchayat, was at his home along with his family, a police official said.

PHOTO: PTI

- Police suspect that Naxalites were behind the murder that occurred late Friday night, but no Maoist pamphlets were found at the spot

Around eight to10 people, dressed as civilians, stormed into Podiyam's house and dragged him on the street. They then attacked him with sharp edged weapons in front of his family members, leaving him dead on the spot, he said.

After committing the crime, the assailants fled into the forest, he added.

Soon after being alerted about it, a team of security personnel from the camp of Chhattisgarh Armed Force (CAF), located around 500 meters away from the village, rushed to the spot, he said.

No Maoist pamphlets were found at the spot. However, the investigation into the murder is underway on all possible angles, including Naxalite handiwork and personal enmity, he said.

According to locals, Naxalites had threatened Podiyam in 2018 with dire consequences, asking him not to support development works in the area. *—PTI*

'Taarak Mehta Ka Ooltah Chashmah' actor goes missing

NEW DELHI, 27 APRIL

Delhi Police on Saturday lodged an abduction case over the disappearance of actor Gurucharan Singh of the famous TV serial 'Taarak Mehta Ka Ooltah Chashmah' fame, officials said.

Multiple teams have been formed to find the 50-year-old actor, who is a Delhi resident, after he went missing five days ago, they said.

He was last seen near the Delhi airport with a backpack, the police said citing a CCTV footage.

A First Information Report (FIR) has been lodged under Section 365 (abduction) and and an investigation has been launched into the matter, they added.

"Actor Gurucharan Singh who plays the role of 'Roshan Singh Sodhi' in the TV serial 'Taarak Mehta Ka Ooltah Chashmah' went missing on 22 April evening," Deputy Commissioner of Police (Southwest) Rohit Meena said.

PHOTO: INSTAGRAM

"Singh's father lodged a missing complaint saying his son had left for Mumbai on 22 April at 8.30pm. He has been missing since then," Meena said.

The actor had left his home here to take a flight for Mumbai. But he did not reach Mumbai, neither he returned to his home and his phone was also unreachable, the complaint stated.

The officer said the police are investigating the entire matter from every angle.

We are looking for footage and we have even found many vital clues through technical investigation. *—PTI*

IPL betting racket busted: 3 arrested in M'rashtra, search on

THANE, 27APRIL

The police in Maharashtra's Thane district have busted an IPL betting racket by conducting a raid at a hotel in Bhiwandi, and arrested three people hailing from Chhattisgarh in this connection, an official said.

The operation was conducted jointly by the officials of the Special Task Force and the Anti-Extortion Cell of the Thane police's crime branch on 25 April, Deputy Commissioner of Police Shivraj Patil said in a press conference on Friday evening.

Efforts are on to trace one more accused, who partnered with the arrested trio and operated the racket from Chhattisgarh, he said.

The accused trio was caught taking bets on the match between Royal Challengers Bengaluru and Sunrisers Hyderabad. They were making use of the mobile applications and collected a total of Rs 11,86,811 from people, the official said.

PHOTO: PTI

- The accused trio was caught taking bets on the match between Royal Challengers Bengaluru and Sunrisers Hyderabad. They were making use of the mobile applications and collected a total of Rs 11,86,811

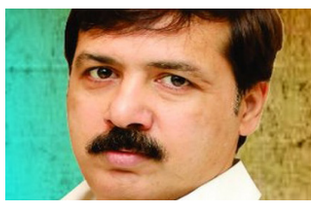
The fourth accused, who operated from Chhattisgarh, collected Rs 7,03,000 from people on the bets, he said.

"The trio had obtained SIM cards by forging documents. During the raids, the police seized 12 mobiles, one tablet and laptop each collectively valued at Rs 1.97 lakh from them," Patil said.

Assistant Commissioner of Police Shekar Bagde said the police have launched an operation to nab the fourth who operated from Korba in Chhattisgarh.

The arrested accused were identified as Shannu Lalit Berival,31, Rajat Babula Sharma,30, and Vijay Sitaram Devgan,40, he said.

A first information report (FIR) was registered under Indian Penal Code (IPC) sections 420 (cheating), 465, 467, 468, 471 (all pertaining to forgery) and 34 (common intention) at the Kongaon police station, the official said. *—PTI*



MP Dhananjay Singh PHOTO: ANI

HC GRANTS BAIL TO EX-MP DHANANJAY

PRAYAGRAJ, 27 APRIL

The Allahabad High Court on Saturday granted bail to former MP Dhananjay Singh but refused his plea to suspend or stay a seven-year imprisonment sentence passed by a district court in a 2020 kidnapping and extortion case.

After the High Court order, Singh will be released on bail but he cannot contest the election.

The MP-MLA court in Jaunpur on 6 March, sentenced Singh and his associate Santosh Vikram to seven years of rigorous imprisonment in a 2020 case of the kidnapping and extortion of Namami Gange project manager Abhinav Singhal.

After hearing the criminal appeal filed by the former MP and his associate on 24 April, Justice Sanjay Kumar Singh had reserved the order.

This appeal was filed against the judgement passed by the special judge, Jaunpur MP/MLA on 6 March. Singh was reportedly preparing to contest from Jaunpur seat but his conviction made him ineligible for the election. *—PTI*

Ch'garh: CBI takes over probe in Bhuneshwar Sahu murder case

PHOTO: ANI

NEW DELHI, 27 APRIL

The CBI has taken over the probe into the killing of a 22-year-old man during communal violence in Chhattisgarh's Bemetara district last year and registered an FIR against 12 people, officials said on Saturday.

Bhuneshwar Sahu was killed in the violence that erupted in Biranpur village on 8 April, 2023, after an altercation between schoolchildren from two communities. On 11 April, Biranpur residents Rahim Mohammad,55, and his son Idul Mohammad,35, were found dead a few kilometers away from the village and there were multiple injuries on their bodies.

In a statement, the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) said, "It was alleged that children studying in class 7-8 of a village were returning from school, when boys of a community working at a junk shop beat them up, on which a meeting was held."

"It was also alleged that when the victim along with his friends went to the locality of the said community in the afternoon, the members of the community started pelting stones from the roof. The victim fell down and as a result sustained head injuries," it said.The accused and others allegedly killed the victim using a knife and other weapons, the statement said.The CBI has taken over the state police FIR against accused. *—PTI*

IN MANIPUR

Assam Rifle's initiative brings Kuki-Meitei students together

UKHRUL, 27 APRIL:

Assam Rifles in Manipur's Ukhrul have provided shelter to 37 girl students, all belonging to Meitei, Kuki and Naga tribes at their Centre of Educational Excellence. The centre has been opened in collaboration with an NGO to provide education opportunities to the students including two tribes Kuki and Meitei that have been involved in violence against each other.

Out of 37 students in the Assam Rifles Centre of Educational Excellence, there are 22 Naga, six Kuki and eight Meitei with one Pangal girl.

Assam Rifles in a statement said that the Centre of Educational Excellence shimmers as a ray of hope to provide the much-needed assistance to the distressed candidates preparing to achieve their career goals.

Earlier, clashes had broke out in the northeastern state in May last year, when a tribal solidarity march organised to protest against the Meitei community's demand for Scheduled Tribe (ST) status turned into violence. The tribes that were involved in the violence included Meitei Kuki communities.

Talking about the initiative of the Assam Rifles, one of the Kuki girls, who belongs to Churachandpur, one of the worst violence-affected districts in Manipur, said, she was immensely helped by the Assam Rifles.

"We feel safe in the centre here as there is no discrimination. I believe only education can improve the condition of Manipur. We are 37 girls and all are from different tribes. We do not feel any difference here. All of us aim to complete our studies and bring the change that is required for the betterment of our society," she said.

A girl from Ukhrul also added that at the camp there is no discrimination between any of the girls. She said they live like one family. *—ANI*

Assam Rifles opens Centre of Educational Excellence in Ukhrul PHOTO: ANI

PROTEST AGAINST EXTORTION

Markets, private offices were closed as an indefinite shutdown of business establishments began in Nagaland on Saturday PHOTO: PTI

Shutdown of businesses begins in Nagaland

KOHIMA, 27 APRIL

Markets were shut and private offices were closed as an indefinite shutdown of business establishments began in Nagaland on Saturday to protest against extortion by underground groups.

The shutdown was first observed in the state's commercial capital Dimapur on Friday, following which the other districts joined on a call given by the Confederation of Nagaland Chamber of Commerce & Industries (CNCCI).

The CNCI said harassment of the business community over extortion cannot be tolerated any further.

It urged the government to take immediate steps to stop the "unabated" extortions, intimidations and summons by the underground groups.

The CNCI said that banks, educational institutions, government offices and hospitals have been kept outside the purview of the shutdown.

State Home Commissioner Vikeyie Kenya said that it has "come to the notice" of the government that "rampant collection of taxes" from businesses, particularly in Dimapur, by various groups, most of which have signed ceasefire agreements with the government, has created an unbearable situation.

"Such activities reflect adversely on the law enforcing agency as well as on the state government," he said, directing the police to take stringent measures.

He instructed the district administrations and the police to report any violation of the ceasefire ground rules to the Ceasefire Monitoring Group for appropriate action.

The Dimapur police commissioner was asked to increase patrolling in market areas, and also deploy IRBn personnel to instill confidence among the people, Kenya said.

The government also directed that a special cell be formed by the police commissioner to exclusively deal with incidents of extortion, he added.

The Dimapur Chamber of Commerce and Industries (DCCI) said directions of such nature were issued by the state government in the past as well.

"However, considering the government's continued insincerity, it does not seem to hold any water," it said. *—PTI*

FREEDOM DAY

An election poster, with President Cyril Ramaphosa atop a pole in Soweto, South Africa. South Africans celebrate "Freedom Day" every 27 April, when they remember their country's pivotal first democratic elections in 1994 that announced the official end of the racial segregation and oppression
PHOTO: PTI

G7 way off-track in emission cuts to achieve 1.5°C target

Reports have exposed gross inaction of countries countering climate impacts ***PHOTO: X/ @ANTONIO_TAJANI***

Two reports, both released on 23 April, have exposed the gross inaction of developed countries in countering climatic impacts globally including in Asia, which has been deemed as the world's 'disaster capital' by the World Meteorological Organisation (WMO).

The report on the response by Group of Seven (G7) countries — Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the United Kingdom and the United States — to climate change shows that these governments currently stand much off track to achieve required emission cuts by 2030. That is the requirement to keep the rise in global temperature within the 1.5°C target, compared to the pre-industrial benchmark, as mandated in the 2015 Paris Agreement.

"Group of Seven (G7) countries are on track to achieve barely half the necessary greenhouse gas emissions reductions by 2030 to meet the Paris Agreement's 1.5°C target," says the report prepared by Climate Analytics, a global climate science and policy institute.

The findings assume importance as the document has been published just few days ahead of the G7 Climate, Energy, and Environment Ministers meeting starting from 28 April in Venaria Reale, Italy.

Missing the bus

The report says that while the "G7 economies need to slash their own emissions by 58% by 2030 compared to 2019 levels to do their part to limit warming to 1.5°C ... the current collective 2030 ambition level of the G7 stands at an insufficient 40-42%, but existing policies suggest that the G7 will likely only achieve a 19-33% reduction by the end of this decade".

"Implementing national climate targets is imperative; no G7 member is even on track to meet their existing targets," cautioned the analysis.

It recommends that these major economies should commit "to phasing out domestic coal and fossil gas power generation by 2030 and 2035 respectively (and) end public financing and other support for fossil fuels abroad".

The document further suggests that the countries must "accelerate towards the global goal of tripling renewables and doubling energy efficiency by 2030 ... commit new and additional international climate finance, well beyond the $100 billion goal, and develop innovative financing instruments to accelerate the provision of accessible finance to vulnerable countries".

"These economies, which make up 38% of the world's GDP, are not pulling their weight, though they have both the technology and the finance to up their game," alleged Neil Grant, the lead author of the analysis.

"The recently concluded World Bank (WB) and International Monetary Fund (IMF) meetings show a marginal increase of $11bn in finance but the gap is still too large and hindering collectivism in climate action. It's urgent that G7 countries should fix the finance first," Sanjay Vashist, director of Climate Action Network South Asia (CANSA) said.

Indian climate governance 'working in silos'

Roxy Mathew Koll, a senior scientist with the Indian Institute for Tropical Meteorology in Pune, observed that India needs to combine integration of climate policies at the top, with climate action at the ground level to combat burgeoning climate impacts in the country, as outlined in the WMO report.

"We need tight integration within ministries like earth science, environment, agriculture and others that are linked to climate action. That is not happening currently," observed Koll. He added that the country further needs 'rigorous granular level assessment and climate adaptation policies, at least at district level'.

Anjal Prakash, a public policy expert at the Indian School of Business (ISB) & Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change author, also argued in favour of more integration within linked departments and involvement of experts in framing Indian climate policy.

"The present climate governance is working more in silos. The plans mooted are mostly paper tigers and hardly provide long-term solutions. India needs a specialised group of people to be involved, as well as more integration, in climate policy framing. You may either have a separate ministry on climate change, or at least a multidisciplinary set up that will engage and coordinate with all linked ministries on climate change to dig out appropriate climate solutions, including local ones," pointed out Prakash.

"WMO report shows though all parts of the world have warmed in record proportion during 1991-2023, the highest decadal increase was recorded over Europe and India," K J Ramesh, former director general of India Meteorological Department said.

"The Indian subcontinent is covered on all three sides by the fastest warming tropical ocean and the melting Himalayan glaciers on the north. This has made the region a poster child of climate change," said Koll.

The scientist added that "the number of cyclones in the Arabian Sea has increased by 50 per cent during the last four decades, and extremely severe cyclones like Tauktae and Amphan are projected to form in the future".

He lamented that though climate change is directly affecting a large share of the population, it is not even a point of discussion in 2024 elections.

—Downtoearth

LETTERS write to us at salarenglishdigital@gmail.com

SALAR سالار

Where do countries stand on the plastic industry?

'Just transition' initiative supports workers ***PHOTO: UNSPLASH***

The concept of 'just transition' encompasses a socio-economic framework that aims to navigate the shift away from plastic-dependent industries towards more sustainable alternatives while ensuring equity and inclusivity. This approach prioritises addressing social and economic impacts associated with transitioning, such as job losses and economic disruptions, by providing support to affected workers and communities. It particularly focuses on marginalised or vulnerable groups, including informal waste workers, ensuring they are not disproportionately affected by industry shifts and promoting social justice through inclusive decision-making processes and resource access.

To support workers and communities during this transition, just transition initiatives involve retraining and upskilling programmes to enable workers to pursue employment in emerging green sectors like renewable energy, recycling and sustainable packaging. These investments in alternative industries not only create new job opportunities but also contribute to economic development. The framework also emphasises global cooperation and solidarity, recognising that transitioning away from plastic pollution requires collective action and support countries and regions.

In practical terms, Parties committed to just transition initiatives aim to promote fair, equitable and inclusive transitions for affected populations, with a special focus on women and vulnerable groups. This includes establishing national coordinating bodies to engage with stakeholders, improving income and livelihood opportunities through workforce training and social programmes tailored to community needs, and incentivising skill development across the plastic value chain. Focus on informal and cooperative workers ensures legal recognition, protection and improved working conditions. These efforts align with broader environmental goals and international efforts to address plastic pollution while fostering social justice and human rights.

The European Union (EU), Pacific Small Island Developing States (PSIDS) and Brazil have proposed higher ambition for just transition provisions. While the EU has proposed promotion of safe working environments, Brazil has proposed including waste pickers and other workers across the life cycle of plastics. PSIDS countries have proposed the inclusion of indigenous people.

The United States and African group have supported most of the existing provisions. They have expressed support for children, youth and stakeholders, including waste pickers. Algeria did not align with the African group and disagreed on legally recognising, protecting and integrating workers from informal and cooperative settings into the safe plastic value chain.

Iran advocated for financing, technology transfer and capacity building from developed countries. It also deleted terminologies like 'vulnerable groups' and 'workers'. It disagreed on legally recognising and protecting workers in waste management cooperatives.

—Downtoearth

The concept of 'just transition' encompasses a socio-economic framework ***PHOTO: UNSPLASH***

IPL: The batting blitz turning cricket into baseball

Batters are unleashing big shots without mercy and turning every match to a festival ***PHOTO: UNSPLASH***

There's been carnage and plunder in the Indian Premier League (IPL), the world's richest cricket tournament, this year.

At grounds across the country, batters are throwing caution to the winds, unleashing big shots without mercy and turning virtually every match into a six-hitting festival. This is leaving bowlers hapless, confounding experts and fans about where Twenty20 cricket is headed.

Look at some of the numbers highlighting the batting mayhem witnessed so far.

After the 39th match of the season between Chennai Super Kings and Lucknow Super Giants on Tuesday night, a total of 1,191 fours and 686 sixes had been struck.

In comparison, IPL 2023 recorded 2,174 fours and 1,124 sixes. With over half the current season remaining, it's reasonable to expect last year's figures to be easily exceeded.

The increase in fours and sixes has correspondingly boosted team totals.

In the early IPL seasons, a score of 150-160 was deemed competitive, but today it often leads to defeat in eight out of 10 games. To illustrate the shift in scoring patterns, consider Yuvraj Singh's six sixes off Stuart Broad in the inaugural T20 World Cup in 2007, where India totalled 218 - a monumental achievement at the time. However, 16 years later, team scores of 200 have become routine.

In the 39 matches of this IPL season up to Tuesday, teams have surpassed the 200-run mark 19 times. Aggregate scores have exceeded 400 runs nine times, with two matches astonishingly surpassing 500 runs! The average run rate this season hovers around 10 per over.

Unfancied Sunrisers Hyderabad, who have been in record-breaking overdrive since the start of the season, clobbered an unprecedented 125 runs in the first powerplay (six overs) against Delhi Capitals which translates into a mind-boggling 20.83 runs per over.

Sunrisers have scored more than 250 runs in an innings thrice this season, with a whopping 287 against Royal Challengers Bangalore, an IPL record suggesting that the 300-run landmark is in danger of being overhauled, perhaps this season itself.

T20 cricket, by nature, guarantees high-octane action. Batting demands relentless stroke play, where even a dot ball is unacceptable. Batters are tasked with maximising run value per delivery, granting them unrestricted freedom to hit. Despite the risks that this strategy brings, the run-scoring, fuelled by boundaries and sixes, has been exceptional this season.

What's influencing such explosive batting?

As a thumb rule, pitches for white-ball cricket, ODIs and T20, are curated to be benign, rather than "sporting" the world over. Because T20 holds out the promise of spectacular action, big shots have become a staple of the format - for fans, broadcasters and sponsors - and everything is done to facilitate this. Unlike in other T20 leagues, IPL takes this seriously enough to ensure that pitches remain strongly batting friendly.

However flat tracks are not the only hurdle bowlers face.

Batters have become fitter, stronger, and more importantly, adventurous, particularly young players weaned on T20 in their formative years. They take more risks, attempt more spectacular feats to win matches, to stave off competition or for greater recognition and reward.

Some rule changes have also contributed in diminishing the role of bowlers.

For instance, the introduction of the Impact Substitute this IPL season has afforded coaches and captains the option of bringing in a player at an opportune time. It's an interesting improvisation, and even a bowler can be brought in as an Impact Sub. But the trend so far favours players who extend batting depth and heft.

Interestingly, former India captain and batting great Sunil Gavaskar puts his weight behind bowlers in this scenario. "If it gets so-one-sided, it takes away from the contest, reduces interest," he says.

Gavaskar's big peeve is about the boundary distance being reduced from the conventional 75 yards to 65 or even lesser.

Given the proficiency of modern bats, even mishits can travel considerable distances, justifying Gavaskar's concern.

Equally intriguingly, former South African pace bowling great Dale Steyn sees the situation as one which challenges the skills and temperament of bowlers. T20 skill sets and mindsets have shifted dramatically from the orthodox and continue to evolve. This demands players across all departments to be dynamic, proactive, and creative.

But the balance between bat and ball has to tend towards equal not to become a fusion of golf and baseball masquerading as cricket. *—BBC News*

PHOTO: X/@NEW_NARRATIVE

Tornadoes bring down buildings, homes in Nebraska

OMAHA, 27 APRIL

Tornadoes wreaked havoc Friday in the Midwest, causing a building to collapse with dozens of people inside and destroying and damaging hundreds of homes, many around Omaha, Nebraska. As of Friday night, there were several reports of injuries but no immediate deaths reported. Tornado warnings continued to be issued into the night in Iowa. Three people were hurt in Nebraska's Lancaster County when a tornado hit an industrial building, causing it to collapse with 70 people inside. Several were trapped, but everyone was evacuated and the injuries were not life-threatening, authorities said. One of the most destructive tornadoes moved for miles Friday through mostly rural farmland before chewing up homes. *—AP*

Iraqi TikTok star Om Fahad shot dead in Baghdad

BAGHDAD, 27 APRIL

Iraqi social media influencer Om Fahad has been shot dead outside her home in Baghdad, according to local media reports. The attack happened in the capital's eastern Zayne neighbourhood on Friday. Iraq confirmed that a "woman known on social networking sites" had been killed by "unknown assailants". It added that a "specialised work team" had been set up to investigate the circumstances of her death. Fahad, whose real name is Ghufran Sawadi, was reportedly shot in her car by a lone person with a gun riding a motorbike. An Iraqi security source told the AFP news agency that the attacker appeared to have been pretending to be making a food delivery. The US-owned Al Hurra news reported that another woman was injured. *—BBC News*

Diddy files motion to dismiss sexual assault case

LOS ANGELES, 27 APRIL

Lawyers for Sean "Diddy" Combs pushed back against a woman's lawsuit that accused him of sexual assault, filing a motion to dismiss some claims that were not under law when the alleged incident occurred. The motion filed in a New York court on Friday claims Combs cannot be sued because certain laws didn't exist when Joi Dickerson-Deal made the allegations against him in 1991. The music mogul's lawyers want certain statues from Dickerson-Deal's claims such as revenge porn and human trafficking to be dismissed with prejudice. In a filing last year, she said Combs "intentionally drugged" her then brought her home and sexually assaulted her. *—AP*

Uzbekistan sends 169 tonnes of aid to Afghanistan

KABUL, 27 APRIL

Afghanistan has received 169 tonnes of aid from Uzbekistan at a time when the country is grappling with a severe humanitarian crisis, Khaama Press reported, adding that the package was delivered to Balkh province from Termez. Taliban's governor of Balkh, Muhammad Yousuf Wafa, and the deputy foreign minister of Uzbekistan, Erkin Khamraev, reportedly overlooked the handover of aid. 48 tonnes of flour, 48 tonnes of wheat, 15 tonnes of vegetable oil, 24 tonnes of sugar, 22 tonnes of macaroni, and packed meat are included in the new aid package, Khaama Press reported citing Uzbekistan's official sources. The humanitarian issue has gotten worse as a result of the current regime's lack of effective strategies to address the welfare of the Afghan people. *—ANI*

Houthis attack India-bound oil tanker

The attack comes after a brief pause in Houthis' campaign that targets ships with Israel ties

JERUSALEM, 27 APRIL

Yemen's Houthis said on Saturday their missiles hit the The India-bound Andromeda Star oil tanker in the Red Sea.

It caused "minor damage" to a Panama-flagged oil tanker.

The attack follows an uptick in assaults launched by the Houthis in recent days after a relative lull in their months-long campaign over Israel's assault on Hamas in the Gaza Strip.

The private security firm Ambrey described the tanker as being "engaged in Russia-linked trade. The vessel was travelling from Primorsk, Russia, to Vadinar, India,

Houthi military spokesman Brig Ge Yahya Saree later claimed the attack early Saturday in a prerecorded statement aired by the rebels. He described the tanker as being "directly hit."

Another vessel, the Antigua-Barbados-flagged, Liberia-operated Maisha, was also nearby at the time of the assault, the US said. The attack occurred off Mocha, Yemen, near the Bab el-Mandeb Strait, which connects the Red Sea to the Gulf of Aden.

The Houthis have launched more than 50 attacks on shipping, seized one vessel and sank another since November, according to the US Maritime Administration.

Private security firm Ambrey described the tanker as being engaged in Russia-linked trade *PHOTO: X/@DEFENCE_NEWS*

- The Houthis have launched more than 50 attacks on shipping, seized one vessel and sank another since November, according to the US.

Houthi attacks have dropped in recent weeks as the rebels have been targeted by a US-led airstrike campaign in Yemen. Shipping through the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden has declined because of the threat. American officials have speculated that the rebels may be running out of weapons as a result of the US-led campaign against them and after firing drones and missiles steadily in the last months.

However, since Wednesday, there have been at least two other attacks claimed by the Houthis. The first targeted the MV Yorktown, a US-flagged, owned and operated vessel with 18 US and four Greek crew members. Another targeted the MSC Darwin. *—AP*

HAMAS REVIEWS ISRAELI PROPOSAL FOR CEASEFIRE

CAIRO, 27 APRIL

Hamas said on Saturday it was reviewing a new Israeli proposal for a ceasefire in Gaza, as Egypt intensified efforts to broker a deal to end the months-long war and stave off a possible Israeli ground offensive into the southern Gaza city of Rafah.

Senior Hamas official Khalil al-Hayya said the Palestinian militant group was evaluating Israel's proposal, and "upon completion of its study, it will submit its response."

He gave no details of Israel's offer but said it was in response to a proposal from Hamas two weeks ago. Negotiations earlier this month centered on a six-week ceasefire proposal and the release of 40 civilian and sick hostages in exchange for freeing hundreds of Palestinian prisoners in Israeli jails. Hamas' statement came hours after a high-level Egyptian delegation wrapped up a visit to Israel where it discussed a "new vision" for a ceasefire in Gaza. *—AP*

US students dig in as faculties frown on cop action

NEW YORK, 27 APRIL

Students protesting the Israel's assault on Gaza at universities across US, some of whom have clashed with police in riot gear. They dug in on Saturday and vowed to keep their demonstrations going, while several school faculties condemned university presidents who have called in law enforcement to remove protesters.

As Columbia University continues negotiations with those at a pro-Palestinian student encampment on the New York school's campus, the university's senate passed a resolution on Friday that created a task force to examine the administration's leadership, which last week called in police in an attempt to clear the protest, resulting in scuffles and more than 100 arrests.

Though the university has repeatedly set and then pushed back deadlines for the removal of the encampment, the school sent an email to students on Friday night saying that bringing back police "at this time" would be counter-productive, adding that they hope the negotiations show "concrete signs of progress tonight."

- In Colorado, police swept through an encampment Friday at Denver's Auraria Campus, which hosts three universities.

As the death toll mounts in the war in Gaza, protesters nationwide are demanding that schools cut financial ties to Israel and divest from companies they say are enabling the conflict.

The decisions to call in law enforcement, leading to hundreds of arrests nationwide, have prompted school faculty members at universities in California, Georgia and Texas to initiate or pass votes of no confidence in their leadership.

In Colorado, police swept through an encampment Friday at Denver's Auraria Campus, which hosts three universities and colleges, arresting around 40 protesters on trespassing charges. *—AP*

As Blinken ends trip, US & China talk past major issues

BEIJING, 27 APRIL

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken wrapped up his visit to China with a stop at a Beijing record store where he bought albums by Taylor Swift and Chinese rocker Dou Wei. This was a symbolic nod to cross-cultural exchanges and understanding he had been promoting for three days.

Music, he said at the Li-Pi shop on his way to the airport late Friday, "is the best connector, regardless of geography." Blinken and his Chinese interlocutors, including Chinese President Xi Jinping and Foreign Minister Wang Yi, all referred to these rifts even as they extolled the virtues of keeping communication channels open to manage these differences and avoid misunderstandings and miscalculations.

Blinken went out of his way to champion the importance of

PHOTO: X/@RAMITPMASTI

US-China exchanges at all levels. In his official meetings with Chinese leaders in Beijing, he spoke repeatedly of improvements in ties over the past year. But he also stressed that the US has serious and growing concerns with China's policies and practices on the local, regional and global stages. And, he said, the US would not back down. "America will always defend our core interests and values," he said.

On several occasions, he slammed Chinese overproduction of electric vehicles that threatened to have detrimental effects on US and European automakers and complained that China was not doing enough to stop the production and export of synthetic opioid precursors.

At one point he warned bluntly that if China does not end support for Russia's defence industrial sector, something the Biden administration says has allowed Russia to step up its attacks on Ukraine and threaten European security, the US would act to stop it.

Chinese officials were similarly direct, saying that while relations have generally improved since a low point last year over the shootdown of a Chinese surveillance balloon, they remained fraught. *—AP*

CHINA LAUNCHES 8 PAK SUBMARINES

ISLAMABAD/BEIJING, 27 APRIL

China has launched the first of the eight Hangor-class submarines to be built for its all-weather ally Pakistan to provide it with state-of-the-art warships, adding a new dimension to their growing bilateral military cooperation.

The launch ceremony was held at Wuchang Shipbuilding Industry Group's (WSIG) Shuangliu Base on Friday. The development comes as part of the agreement between Islamabad and Beijing under which the latter had agreed to provide the former with eight state-of-the-art advanced submarines. *—AP*

AMIDST INTERNAL STRIFE

Nawaz to retake helm of PML-N after 7 yrs

LAHORE, 27 APR

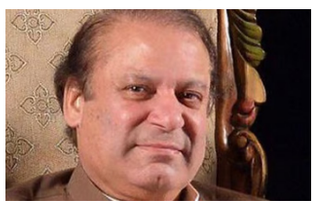
Pakistan's three-time former prime minister Nawaz Sharif is all set to retake the helm of the ruling PML-N next month to guide the party amid internal strife. This was seven years after he relinquished the post after being disqualified by the apex court.

Nawaz, 74, will be elected president of the ruling party on 11 May in a meeting of the party leadership, a senior Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) leader told PTI.

In 2017, the Supreme Court of Pakistan disqualified Nawaz as premier and party president for his alleged corruption in cases related to the Panama Papers revelations about his illegal wealth stashed abroad.

He relinquished his position within the party following his disqualification, which also led to his departure from the prime minister's office.

PML-N Punjab president Rana Sanaullah told a press conference that a decision to make Nawaz the president of the party again was taken at a



Nawaz Sharif *PHOTO: PTI*

party meeting on Friday.

The party will request Nawaz on his return from China to accept the president's office of the party.

Nawaz is currently on a five-day private visit to China.

"Nawaz Sharif was removed from the party president's office through a conspiracy. Now Nawaz has been acquitted in all (corruption) cases, he should again take up the party's reins," Sanaullah said and added the party would be re-organised under his (Nawaz's) leadership.

Sanaullah's announcement comes amidst internal tensions within the ruling party in Punjab and at the federal level, The Express Tribune newspaper said. *—PTI*

Ready to serve 9 more yrs in prison than enslaving Pak: Imran

Pakistan's jailed former prime minister Imran Khan has ruled out an agreement with those who have "enslaved" the country, saying he is ready to serve for nine more years in prison but will never strike a deal with them. In a message released on Friday for the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party's 28th Foundation Day, Khan said that the "worst dictatorship" was imposed on the country which was becoming the basis for the "destruction" of the economy, government rule, democracy and judiciary". He called on every individual to play their role in stopping this descent towards the country's ruin. Khan said he was kept behind bars for the past nine months due to "fake [and] concocted cases". *—PTI*

KYIV RETALIATES

Russia renews attacks on Ukrainian energy sector

Russia said its air defence systems had intercepted more than 60 Ukrainian drones *PHOTO: X/@TMCNEWSAGENCY*

KYIV, 27 APRIL

Russia launched a barrage of missiles against Ukraine overnight, in attacks that appeared to target the country's energy infrastructure. Meanwhile, Russia said its air defence systems had intercepted more than 60 Ukrainian drones over the southern Krasnodar region.

Ukraine's air force said Saturday that Russia had launched 34 missiles against Ukraine overnight, of which 21 had been shot down by Ukrainian air defences.

In a post on Telegram, Minister of Energy Herman Halushchenko said energy facilities in Dnipropetrovsk and Ivano-Frankivsk and Lviv in the west were attacked and an engineer was injured.

Private energy operator DTEK said four of its thermal power plants were damaged and that there were casualties.

Earlier this month, Russia destroyed one of Ukraine's largest power plants and damaged others in a massive missile and drone attack as it renewed its push to target Ukraine's energy facilities.

Ukraine has appealed to its Western allies for more air defence systems to ward off such attacks. At a meeting of the Ukraine Defence Contact Group on Friday, US Defence Secretary Lloyd Austin announced the US will provide Ukraine with additional munitions and gear for its air defence launchers.

Further east, a psychiatric hospital was damaged and one person was wounded after Russia launched a missile attack overnight on Ukraine's second-largest city, Kharkiv.

In Russia, the Defence Ministry said Russian air defense systems had intercepted 66 drones over the country's southern Krasnodar region. Two more drones were shot down over the Moscow-annexed Crimean Peninsula. *—AP*

PENTAGON TO 'RUSH' PATRIOT MISSILES TO KYIV

WASHINGTON, 27 APRIL

The Pentagon says it will "rush" Patriot air defence missiles and artillery ammunition to Ukraine as part of its new military aid package.

However Patriot systems for launching the missiles will not be sent, Defence Secretary Lloyd Austin said.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said Patriots were "urgently" needed to face a growing Russian air threat and "can and should save lives right now".

Speaking on Friday, Austin told a news conference that the US was committing to its largest security assistance package to date and would "move immediately" to get the supplies to Ukraine. The US was using $6bn for this purpose, he said. A source confirmed to the BBC that the $6bn was part of a $60bn aid package signed into law by US President Joe Biden on Wednesday, which also includes $1bn in more immediate aid. *—BBC News*

PHOTO: BBC NEWS

LONG LINES NEAR ATM

Anger grows as Cuba runs short of cash

HAVANA, 27 APRIL

Alejandro Fonseca stood in line for several hours outside a bank in Havana hoping to withdraw Cuban pesos from an ATM, but when it was almost his turn, the cash ran out.

He angrily hopped on his electric tricycle and travelled several kilometres to another branch where he finally managed to withdraw some money after wasting the entire morning.

"It shouldn't be so difficult to get the money you earn by working," the 23-year-old told The Associated Press.

Fonseca is one of an increasing number of frustrated Cubans who have to grapple with yet another hurdle while navigating the island's already complicated monetary system — a shortage of cash.

Long queues outside banks and ATM's in the capital, Havana, and beyond start forming early in the day as people seek cash for routine transactions like buying food and other essentials.

Experts say there are several reasons for this *PHOTO: X/@IFINANCIALNEWS*

Experts say there are several reasons behind the shortage, all somehow related to Cuba's deep economic crisis, one of the worst in decades.

Omar Everleny Pérez, a Cuban economist and university professor, says the main culprits are the government's growing fiscal deficit, the non-existence of banknotes with a denomination greater than 1,000 Cuban pesos, stubbornly high inflation and the non-return of cash to banks.

"There is money, yes, but not in the banks," said Pérez, adding that most of the cash is being held not by salaried workers, but by entrepreneurs and owners of small- and medium-size business who are more likely to collect cash from commercial transactions but are reluctant to return the money to the banks.

This, Pérez says, is either because they don't trust the local banks or simply because they need the Cuban pesos to convert into foreign currency.

Most entrepreneurs and small business owners in Cuba have to import almost everything they sell or pay in foreign currency for the supplies needed to run their businesses. As a consequence, many end up hoarding Cuban pesos to later change into foreign currency on the informal market.

Converting those Cuban pesos to other currencies poses yet another challenge, as there are several, highly fluctuating exchange rates in the island.

For example, the official rate used by government industries and agencies is 24 pesos to the US dollar, while for individuals, the rate is 120 pesos to the dollar. However, the dollar can fetch up to 350 Cuban pesos on the informal market.

Pérez notes that in 2018, 50 per cent of the cash in circulation was in the hands of the Cuban population and the other half in Cuban banks. But in 2022, the latest year for which information is available, 70 per cent of cash was in the wallets of individuals. *—AP*

Indiabulls Real Estate loss widens to Rs 1,038 cr

NEW DELHI, 27 APRIL

Indiabulls Real Estate Ltd (IBREL) has posted widening of consolidated net loss at Rs 1,038.65 crore for the last fiscal year. Its net loss stood at Rs 608.38 crore in 2022-23. Total income also fell to Rs 468.75 crore during 2023-24 from Rs 648.47 crore in the preceding year, according to a regulatory filing on Friday. IBREL's ness loss in March quarter FY24 narrowed to Rs 302 crore from Rs 375.99 crore in the year-ago period. Total income fell to Rs 39.54 crore in the quarter from Rs 132.91 crore in the year-ago period. Mumbai-based IBREL is one of the leading real estate developers in the country. *—PTI*

Mahindra Lifespace profit falls to ₹ 98 cr

NEW DELHI, 27 APRIL

Mahindra Lifespace Developers Ltd has reported a marginal decline in consolidated net profit to Rs 97.89 crore during the last fiscal year on lower income. Its net profit stood at Rs 101.43 crore in the preceding year. According to a regulatory filing on Friday, the company's total income fell to Rs 279.12 crore last fiscal from Rs 659.56 crore in 2022-23. Mahindra Lifespace is the real estate and infrastructure development business of Mahindra Group. During the fourth quarter of last fiscal, the company's consolidated net profit surged to Rs 71.15 crore from just Rs 55 lakh in the year-ago period. Total income declined to Rs 54.60 crore in the quarter as against Rs 270.26 crore in the year-ago period. Established in 1994, Mahindra Lifespace's development footprint spans 37.33 million square feet of completed, ongoing and forthcoming residential projects across seven Indian cities. *—PTI*

NDTV clocks 59 pc growth in revenue

NEW DELHI, 27 APRIL

NDTV Group announced its financial performance for the fourth quarter of 2023-24, marked by a 59 per cent revenue growth compared to the same period last year. Revenue during the quarter was at Rs 106.5 crore versus Rs 67.0 crore last year. During the financial year, NDTV expanded its presence across consumer segments with launch of NDTV MP-CG, NDTV Rajasthan, and NDTV Profit. Additionally, NDTV Marathi is being launched on 1 May. NDTV said it remains committed to creating long-term shareholder value by leveraging its premium brand value to launch new products, expand audience and drive efficiency by investments in technology. Attrition in the media company was down by 58 per cent from the previous year. It also added high-profile anchors and other top industry talent to its roster. *—ANI*

RBL Bank Q4 net profit jumps 30 pc to Rs 353 crore

NEW DELHI, 27 APRIL

Private sector lender RBL Bank on Saturday reported a 30 per cent rise in the post-tax net profit for the March quarter at Rs 353 crore, driven by non-interest income. Maharahstra-based lender had reported a net profit of Rs 271 crore in the year-ago period. Its core net interest income grew 18 per cent to Rs 1,600 crore on a 20 per cent loan growth. However, it was limited by a compression in the net interest margin to 5.45 per cent against 5.62 per cent a year ago. The other income grew 30 per cent to Rs 875 crore during the reporting quarter. Its managing director and chief executive R Subramaniakumar told reporters that he sees advances continuing to grow in the 20 per cent range going forward as well. The deposit growth came at 22 per cent even in the challenging market. On the asset quality front, overall slippages increased to 0.56 per cent of the assets from the year-ago period's 0.44 per cent and were driven by micro-lending and also unsecured loans. *—PTI*

Centre allows 99.5K tonnes of onion exports

The decision is taken despite the ban on shipments

NEW DELHI, 27 APRIL

The ban was imposed amid increase in demand in market **PHOTO: PTI**

Centre on Saturday said it has allowed exports of 99,500 tonnes of onions, mainly sourced from Maharashtra, to six neighbouring countries despite the ban on shipments.

Centre has also allowed exports of 2,000 tonnes of white onion cultivated, especially, for export markets in the Middle East and some European countries.

On 8 December, 2023, the government banned export of onions.

In an official statement, the Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food & Public Distribution said the government has "allowed export of 99,150 tonnes of onion to six neighbouring countries of Bangladesh, UAE, Bhutan, Bahrain, Mauritius and Sri Lanka".

The export prohibition has been imposed to ensure adequate domestic availability against the backdrop of estimated lower Kharif and Rabi crops in 2023-24 compared to the previous year.

The ban was imposed amid an increase in demand in the international market, it added.

The offer rate of NCEL to the buyers takes into account the prevailing prices in the destination market and also international and domestic markets.

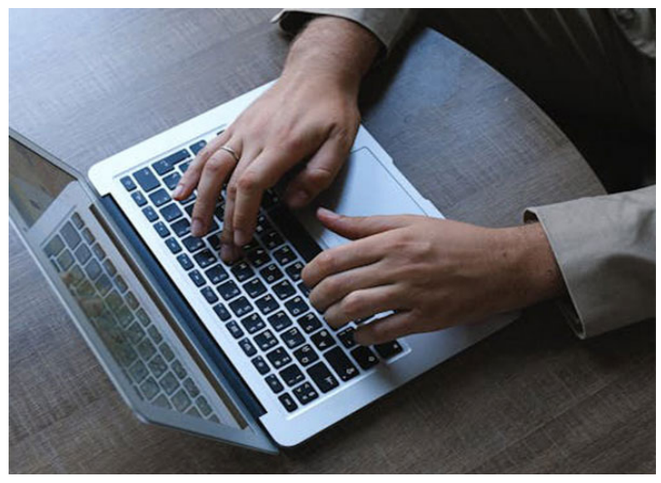
The quota allocated for export to the six countries is being supplied as per requisition made by the destination country. The pilot of onion irradiation and cold storage taken up last year has been found to have resulted in the reduction of storage loss to less than 10 per cent, the statement said. In March, the Union Agriculture Ministry released the data for onion production.

As per the data, onion production in 2023-24 (First Advance Estimates) is expected to be around 254.73 lakh tonnes compared to around 302.08 lakh tonnes last year. This is due to a decrease of 34.31 lakh tonne output in Maharashtra, 9.95 lakh tonne in Karnataka, 3.54 lakh tonne in Andhra Pradesh and 3.12 lakh tonne in Rajasthan, the data showed.. *—PTI*

INTERESTING TREND

Govt portal offered more jobs than applied for in FY24

NEW DELHI, 27 APRIL



Jobs were posted on the NCS portal by employers **PHOTO: PTI**

Vacancies listed on the government's job portal National Career Service (NCS) displayed an interesting trend. The NCS data shows that in the fiscal year 2023-24 jobs available through the portal were significantly higher than job seekers.

The number of job-seekers registered through the portal in FY24 is 87,27,900 as against job vacancies of 1,092,4161, as per NCS data.

Jobs were posted on the NCS portal by employers for people with different skills and educational qualifications.

For 12th pass 68,77,532 jobs were posted which was 179 per cent up from FY23. For 10th pass or below there were 27,04,280 jobs were posted which was 452 per cent up from previous year. For ITI and diploma holders 4,02,192 jobs were posted in FY24 which was 378 per cent up from the previous year.

For graduates the number of jobs posted on the portal were 7,33,277 which was 129 per cent more than FY23. Those who were post graduate, PhD or PG diploma holders for them 60,531 jobs 123 per cent up from FY23.

The data on the government portal suggests that there were enough jobs available for every category of job seekers. More demand were for low skilled and low paid jobs.

The number of active employers on the NCS job portal stands at 15,64,800, which is 89 per cent more than FY23. *—ANI*

- The number of job-seekers with registered through the portal in FY24 is 87,27,900 as against job vacancies of 1,092,4161, as per NCS data

UNTIL 26 JULY

India, Taipei ask WTO body to delay ruling on ICT import duties

NEW DELHI, 27 APRIL

Panel's ruling can be challenged at WTO's appellate body **PHOTO: PTI**

India and Chinese Taipei have asked the WTO's dispute settlement body not to adopt any ruling against New Delhi's import duties on certain information and technology products till 26 July as both sides are engaged in resolving the matter, an official said.

The issue came up during a meeting of the dispute settlement body (DSB) in Geneva on 26 April.

Earlier also, DSB had agreed to three previous requests from India and Chinese Taipei to delay consideration of the reports.

As per rules of the WTO, the panel's ruling will have to be adopted by DSB for implementation within 60 days of the release of the order. However, countries can mutually request DSB for delay in adoption of the ruling.

In its report, a dispute panel of WTO on 17 April, 2023 said import duties imposed by India on certain information and technology products violate global trading norms.

The ruling followed a case filed by the EU, Japan and Taiwan against these duties in WTO.

India has stated that these ICT products are part of WTO's Information Technology Products (ITA-2) agreement, and New Delhi is not part of this pact. India is a part of ITA-1, signed in 1997, which did not have any obligation to eliminate customs duties on these products.

Bilateral consultation is the first step to resolving a dispute. If both sides are not able to resolve the matter through consultation, either of them can approach the establishment of a dispute settlement panel.

The panel's ruling or report can be challenged at WTO's appellate body. *—PTI*

RBI initiates finance banks to ascend banking status

NEW DELHI, 27 APRIL

PHOTO: PTI

Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has introduced guidelines for the voluntary transition of Small Finance Banks (SFBs) to Universal Banks, effective immediately.

According to the guidelines, SFBs seeking to transition into Universal Banks must meet specific eligibility criteria. Firstly, they must maintain a satisfactory track record of performance for a minimum of five years.

Additionally, their shares should be listed on a recognized stock exchange, and they must possess a minimum net worth of Rs 1,000 crore as at the end of the previous quarter (audited).

Moreover, they should meet the prescribed Capital to Risk-weighted Assets Ratio (CRAR) requirements for SFBs and have recorded a net profit in the last two financial years.

Asset quality is also a key factor, with GNPA and NNPA required to be less than or equal to 3 percent and 1 percent respectively in the last two financial years.

Upon transition, the bank will be subjected to all relevant norms, including the Non-Operative Financial Holding Company (NOFHC) structure, as per the guidelines.

This initiative, outlined in Paragraph 14 of the "Guidelines for 'on-tap' Licensing of Small Finance Banks in Private Sector" dated December 5, 2019, provides a clear pathway for SFBs to convert into Universal Banks, subject to certain conditions. *—ANI*

YES BANK Q4 PROFIT DOUBLES TO RS 452 CR

NEW DELHI, 26 APRIL

Yes Bank on Saturday reported over two-fold jump in standalone net profit at Rs 452 crore for March quarter 2023-24, primarily due to benefits on the provision front.

In the year-ago quarter, the bank logged a profit of Rs 202.43 crore.

The private sector lender benefitted from write-back on income tax and interest on income tax returns, but the profits were limited by its inability to comply with the mandatory priority sector lending (PSL) requirements, its management said.

For fiscal 2023-24, it reported 74 per cent growth in net profit at Rs 1,251 crore.

In the March quarter, the core net interest income grew just 2.3 per cent to Rs 2,153 crore on the back of narrowing of Net Interest Margin to 2.4 per cent from 2.8 per cent in the year-ago period.

The overall exposures to RIDF has shot up to 11 per cent of the balance sheet from 8 per cent, and the target is to get it down to 5 per cent by FY27, an official said. Kumar added that the bank is still looking to acquire a microfinancier which will help it on the PSL front.

On the asset quality front, it witnessed fresh slippages of Rs 1,356 crore and attributed a third of them to unsecured lending products, which have been under the regulatory lens.

An official said the bank has slowed the pace of new credit card additions, and has stopped onboarding customers from lower segments who are unable to pay up.

Gross non-performing assets ratio improved to 1.7 per cent from the year-ago period's 2.2 per cent.

The recently announced partnership with Paytm has taken up the overall UPI transactions it handles to 5 billion a month from the 3.8 billion earlier.

The bank is planning to add 30 more branches in the April-June period to its network of 1,234 branches. *— PTI*

Auto industry poised to reach USD 300 billion by 2026

NEW DELHI, 27 APRIL

India's drive towards electric vehicles (EVs) is gaining momentum **PHOTO: PTI**

India's rapidly growing auto market is poised to hit a milestone, with projections indicating it will reach USD 300 billion by 2026. This growth is fueled by various factors, including rising income levels, urbanization, and a burgeoning middle class with increasing purchasing power.

In March 2024, the Indian auto industry produced a total of 2,325,959 units, covering Passenger Vehicles, Three-wheelers, Two-wheelers, and Quadricycles.

Passenger Vehicles accounted for 368,086 units, Three-wheelers saw 56,723 units, and Two-wheelers dominated with 1,487,579 units sold during the domestic sales for the month of March.

India's drive towards electric vehicles (EVs) is gaining momentum. It is projected to become the third-largest EV market by 2025, with 2.5 million vehicles expected to be on the roads.

The sector presents a massive investment opportunity of over USD 200 billion over the next 8-10 years, with the EV market expected to grow at a CAGR of 49 per cent between 2022-2030.

With India poised to lead the EV revolution and solidify its position as a global automotive hub, the future of the Indian automobile industry looks promising and exciting.

The increasing demand for aftermarket products and services is being driven by factors such as the growing vehicle parc, rising consumer awareness, and a shift towards vehicle customization.

Furthermore, the auto components industry in India is gearing up for exponential growth in exports.

Projections indicate that exports from this industry are set to grow fivefold in the next 10 years.

India's auto components sector is already a significant contributor to the country's exports, and this anticipated surge underscores the industry's potential to become a global powerhouse.

Factors such as competitive pricing, quality standards, and technological advancements are expected to drive this robust growth in exports. *—ANI*

- Indian auto industry produced a total of 2,325,959 units, covering Passenger Vehicles

GLOBAL E-COMMERCE POWERHOUSE

India projected to surpass USD 800 bn digital economy by 2030

NEW DELHI, 27 APRIL

It is fueled by digital economy and internet user base **PHOTO: ANI**

The e-commerce market in India is expected to skyrocket to USD 325 billion by the same year, with the digital economy reaching a staggering USD 800 billion.

According to Invest India, with 881 million users, India has the 2nd largest Internet user-base globally, and set to become the 3rd largest online retail market by 2030.

India is on the trajectory to become a global e-commerce powerhouse by 2030, fueled by a burgeoning digital economy and a rapidly expanding internet user base.

The future scenario paints a picture of India leading the charge in online shopping, with an estimated 500 million shoppers by 2030.

Currently, India's e-commerce sector stands at a market size of USD 70 billion, constituting around 7 per cent of the total retail market in the country.

The internet penetration has witnessed significant growth, with 52 per cent of the Indian population, approximately 759 million people, accessing the internet in 2022.

Several factors contribute to India's e-commerce boom.

The number of online shoppers in India is projected to increase significantly, with a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 22 per cent to 88 million in rural India and 15 per cent to 263 million across urban India between 2019 and 2026.

India's affordability in data prices also plays a pivotal role, with one gigabyte of data costing approximately USD 0.17 (Rs 13.5), driving the majority of the population online.

The rise in smartphone users, projected to reach 1.18 billion by 2026, coupled with an increase in average data consumption per user, further propels the digital economy.

Mobile data traffic has tripled from 2018 to 2023, showcasing the increasing reliance on digital platforms for various needs.

Unified Payments Interface (UPI) has emerged as a significant player in digital payments, accounting for USD 1.5 trillion transactions in 2022.

By 2026, 81 per cent of India's population is expected to have access to smartphones.

Key mergers and acquisitions in the e-commerce sector have been notable, with companies like Zomato and PhonePe making strategic moves to strengthen their positions.

Government initiatives like Jan Dhan Yojana, BharatNet Project, and the introduction of Goods & Service Tax (GST) have played a crucial role in shaping India's digital economy. *—ANI*

- India has the 2nd largest Internet user-base globally, and set to become the 3rd largest online retail market by 2030 with 881 miilion users

BIGGEST CRICKET CARNIVAL

PHOTO: PTI

Archery WC: Jyothi grabs hat-trick of gold medals

SHANGHAI, 27 APRIL

Asian Games champion Jyothi Surekha Vennam's incredible presence of mind helped her bag a stunning hat-trick of gold medals as she spearheaded India's dominance at the ongoing Archery World Cup Stage 1 in Shanghai here on Saturday. The world No. 3 Jyothi fought past tournament top seed Andrea Becerra of Mexico in a tight shoot-off finish 146=146 (9*-9) to complete a rare feat during the season-opening global showpiece. It also matched her feat at last year's Hangzhou Asian Games where 27-year-old Vijayawada archer returned with a hat-trick of gold medals, winning individual, women's team, and mixed team events.*—PTI*

Indian women beat Canada 4-1 in Uber Cup

CHENGDU, 27 APRIL

Ashmita Chaliha produced an inspired show to stun higher-ranked Michelle Li as the Indian women's team notched up a clinical 4-1 win over Canada to make a positive start in the Uber Cup tournament here on Saturday. The left-handed Chaliha, ranked 53rd, showed great mental resolve and tenacity as she outwitted world no. 25 Li, a gold and silver medallist at the 2014 and 2022 Commonwealth Games, 26-24 24-22 in a 42-minute opening singles clash. Chaliha, who was part of India's maiden Asia Team Championships win in February, took over the leadership role in the absence of the top guns including P V Sindhu, and delivered against Li, who is on a comeback trail after undergoing surgery for a meniscus tear on her right knee last August.*—PTI*

Pakistan to tour NZ next year for 3 ODIs, 5 T20Is

LAHORE, 27 APRIL

The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) confirmed that its national side will tour New Zealand next year to play three ODIs and five T20 Internationals. The series, the sixth between the two nations since 2023, was finalized during a meeting between PCB Chairman Mohsin and New Zealand Cricket (NZC) CEO Scott in Lahore on the sidelines of the ongoing five-match T20I rubber. *—PTI*

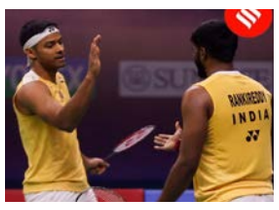


PHOTO: AFP

Lakshya wins thriller as India beat Thailand 4-1

LONDON, 26 APRIL

The Indian men's team, who are the defending world champions, began the Thomas Cup campaign on a winning note against Thailand in Chengdu at the Thomas and Uber Cup Finals. HS Prannoy, Satwik-Chirag, Srikanth Kidambi, and Lakshya Sen created history in Bangkok when India won the Thomas Cup for the first time in history. And they were all in action against Thailand in their Group C opener. Earlier in the day, Ashmita Chaliha defeated higher-ranked Michelle Li to give India a superb start in a crucial Uber Cup Group A tie in Chengdu on Saturday, as they went on to win over Thailand 4-1.*—PTI*

McGurk and Stubbs rock as DC beat MI by 10 runs

McGurk gave the scorching Delhi heat competition with a sizzling 27-ball 84

NEW DELHI, 27 APRIL

Jake Fraser-McGurk produced a power-hitting master class as Delhi Capitals kept themselves in the race for IPL play-offs with a 10-run win over Mumbai Indians here on Saturday.

Bringing his big-hitting prowess to the fore, young McGurk gave the scorching Delhi heat competition with a sizzling 27-ball 84, powering DC to a massive 257 for four after being asked to bat.

Tilak Varma (63) and Hardik Pandya (46) played some lofty shots to give MI a glimmer of hope but Delhi bowlers, led by Rasikh Salam (3/34), kept striking at regular intervals to stop MI at 247 for 9.

The win elevated DC to the fifth spot while MI continued to occupy the penultimate place. While McGurk sparkled upfront, Tristan Stubbs dazzled with an unbeaten 48 off 25 balls at the death overs as DC put up a superlative batting effort to register their highest-ever score in IPL.

In reply, MI's script didn't go as planned as Khaleel Ahmed drew first blood in the form of Rohit Sharma (8).

Delhi Capitals batter Jake Fraser-McGurk celebrates his half century as his teammate Abishek Porel looks on *PHOTO: PTI*

With more than 250 runs to score, MI batters had to go from the word go and that led to Ishan Kishan's (20) and Suryakumar Yadav's (26) wickets. But 'Impact Player' Salam not only broke the partnership, claiming Pandya's wicket but also got rid of Nehal Wadhera in the same over. Facing arguably the best bowler in the world, the Australian greeted Jasprit Bumarah with a six-over logon, followed by a four in the second over.

Replacing Wood, Nuwan Thushara also couldn't stop McGurk, who displayed his brute force, smashing three fours.

With his pacers being carted all over the park, MI skipper Pandya decided to introduce spin in the form of Piyush Chawla but it hardly mattered to McGurk, who struck a maximum over long-on to get his third IPL fifty.

McGurk then took a special liking for Pandya as he clobbered the ball out of the park before sending one over deep mid-wicket as Abhishek Porel (36) had the best seat to enjoy the stroke-making, standing at the other end. The South African continued his menacing form as the over-read 4, 4, 6, 4, 4, 4. However, Bumrah displayed his class as he came in with a bouncer in the next over to get Pant, who attempted a pull only to find Rohit at deep backward square leg.

Brief scores:
Delhi Capitals: 257/4 in 20 overs (Jake Fraser-McGurk 84, Shai Hope 41, Tristan Stubbs 48 not out).

Mumbai Indians: 247/9 in 20 overs (Hardik Pandya 46, Tilak Varma 63, Tim David 37; Rasikh Dar Salam 3/34, Mukesh Kumar 3/59).. *—PTI*

Inconsistent CSK face bruised SRH in IPL

CHENNAI, 27 APRIL

Smarting from back-to-back losses, defending champion Chennai Super Kings will be desperate to return to winning ways when they face a formidable but bruised Sunrisers Hyderabad in their IPL match here on Sunday.

CSK had a good start to the season under new skipper Ruturaj Gaikwad but they have been toppled by the Lucknow Super Giants twice in the last two games.

It was an unfamiliar sight for the Yellow Brigade fans to see the Chepauk fortress being breached as LSG knocked down a target of 210 with ease, thanks to Marcus Stoinis' stunning hundred.

With four wins and as many losses in eight games, CSK are currently in fifth spot, tied with eight points with Delhi Capitals and Gujarat Titans,

Jadeja and Dhoni *PHOTO: PTI*

and will be keen to find their mojo back as things can quickly go south as the race to play-offs get heated up.

Come Sunday, CSK will be up against third-ranked Sunrisers Hyderabad, who have twice broken the record of the highest IPL total this season but are coming into the game following a failure of their ultra-aggressive batting approach against RCB. *—PTI*

TODAY'S MATCH

SUNRISERS HYDERABAD vs CHENNAI SUPER KINGS 2024

Time: 7:30 PM

Where To Watch:
Jio Cinema, Star Sports Network

Stadium: MA Chidamabaram Stadium, Chennai

Maheshwari leads qualification heading into final day

NEW DELHI, 27 APRIL

India's Maheshwari Chauhan shot two perfect rounds of 25 to head into the final day of the women's skeet competition on the top spot at the ISSF Olympic Qualification Championship for shotgun shooters, in Doha on Saturday. The top six qualify for the finals on Sunday, which will follow one final round of qualification. There are two Paris Olympic quota places up for grabs in the event.aheshwari's two-day tally of 98, which includes three perfect rounds, was one more than three others, notably Francisca Chadid (already a quota winner) of Chile, the dangerous Assem Orynbay of Kazakhstan, and Victoria Larsson of Sweden. *—PTI*

MAN UNITED DRAW TO BURNLEY

LONDON, 27 APRIL

Manchester United could only muster a point against Burnley on Saturday after substitute Zeki Amdouni scored a late penalty to rescue a 1-1 Premier League draw for the relegation-threatened side.

Burnley's 87th-minute penalty, awarded after goalkeeper André Onana fouled Amdouni in the box, canceled a late strike by Antony and left Erik Ten Hag's team sixth in the standings.

The draw leaves United in sixth place in the Premier League. They will be mathematically ruled out of qualifying for the Champions League if fourth-placed Aston Villa pick up at least a point against Chelsea later on Saturday. *—AP*

INDIAN PREMIER LEAGUE 2024

GT eye collective improvement against RCB

AHMEDABAD, 27 APRIL

PHOTO: PTI

In need of a total reboot, Gujarat Giants will be wary of Royal Challengers Bengaluru's newfound firepower in the middle-order when the two teams clash in the Indian Premier League here on Sunday.

The Giants are now seventh on the table with eight points from nine matches, and they require a victory to float above the growing pile, constituted by Chennai Super Kings and Delhi Capitals who are also on eight points.

To begin with, the Gujarat side needs their pacers to step up. Their pace bowling unit has been underwhelming throughout this IPL.

Mohit Sharma (10 wickets, economy: 10.35), Umesh Yadav (7 wickets, 10.55), Sandeep Warrier (5 wickets, 10.85) have leaked runs in plenty while backup quicks such as Spencer Johnson and Azmatullah Omarzai too have not inspired much confidence.

Their spinners – Rashid Khan (8 wickets), R Sai Kishore, and Noor Ahmad (6 wickets each) – have been steady without being spectacular.

The troika's task will be even harder now considering RCB have found a flicker of hope in their middle-order consisting of Rajat Patidar and Cameron Green.

They can take consolation from the fact that dew will not be a significant factor in a day game, but tackling Patidar, in particular, and Green needs much more than help from conditions.

After a modest beginning to the season, Patidar has shown smidgeons of his batting skills, especially against the spinners.

He made forceful fifties while tackling Sunil Narine Varun Chakravarthy (KKR) and Mayank Markande (SRH) in the last two matches while batting through the middle phase.

While his 23-ball 52 carried RCB nearly home against Kolkata, Patidar's 20-ball 50 came in a winning cause against Hyderabad. *—PTI*

TODAY'S MATCH

ROYAL CHALLENGERS BENGALURU vs GUJARAT TITANS

Time: 3:30 PM

Where To Watch:
Jio Cinema, Star Sports Network

Stadium: Narendra Modi Stadium in Ahmedabad

Mohun Bagan count on home support to overturn deficit

KOLKATA, 27 APRIL

A two-goal deficit is what Mohun Bagan will have to overturn against Odisha FC to continue their dream of becoming the first team to win both the League Winners Shield and the ISL title in their return leg semifinal here on Sunday.

They will be backed by a crowd of 60,000-plus at the Salt Lake Stadium as the Antonio Lopez Habas-coached side will make a return to the same venue two weeks after they defeated Mumbai City FC in the ISL final round to win their maiden Shield.

It was Mohun Bagan's second triumph this season

PHOTO: @MOHUNBAGANSG

which began with victory in the Durand Cup and was followed by East Bengal's Super Cup and Mohammedan Sporting's I-League triumph, making it four titles by the city's Big Three this season.

That the ISL summit clash on May 4 will be at the Salt Lake Stadium, if Mohun Bagan makes the final, will be an added incentive for the Mariners.The home side would be desperate to overcome the first hurdle.

The match will go to extra time if Mohun Bagan gets a one-goal advantage in regulation time.The Subhasish Bose-led side, who will miss key marksman Armando Sadiku upfront because of a suspension, will have to bring out their A-game into play. *—PTI*

LIVERPOOL VS WEST HAM 2-2

Klopp's team drops more points in title hunt

LONDON, 27 APRIL

This was a fixture where both teams had everything to gain from a win.

While Liverpool's title challenge, which is currently in tatters, could be revived to an extent, for West Ham, placed in the 8th spot ahead of this match, a win would have meant making a meaningful movement towards higher spots with a misfiring Manchester United in sight just ahead of them. As for Liverpool, going for a win would have meant leapfrogging Manchester City and jumping into the second spot behind Arsenal again.

And since this is Manager Jurgen Klopp's last season at Liverpool, the team should have had motivation enough to try to go beyond the line of duty to log a win. Of course, even then, going forward, Liverpool's title chase can be revived only if Arsenal or City lose some of their remaining

Liverpool suffered another blow to their dwindling Premier League title hopes *PHOTO: AFP*

matches. Adding to the woes of Liverpool was that Mohammad Salah and Darwin Nunez have gone off-scoring.

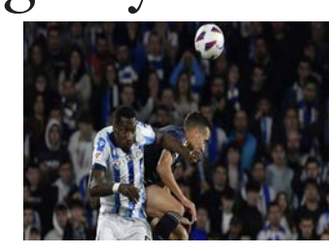
That was all before the match. And it is clear now which one of these two teams was the hungrier of the two for a win.In what finally turned out a thrilling match, the sides battled to a 2-2 draw. Although Liverpool dominated the proceedings, they were just too wasteful of the chances created shooting wide or at the goalkeeper.

- While Liverpool's title challenge, which is currently in tatters, could be revived to an extent, for West Ham, placed in the 8th spot ahead of this match, a win would have meant making a meaningful movement towards higher spots with a misfiring Manchester United in sight just ahead of them

In effect, if they were already not so, Klopp's side are truly out of the title race now.It all started predictably enough with Liverpool dominating in terms of ball possession and Wes Ham United looking to break on the counter-attack. Considering that they have a weak back and a sharp attack, the strategy made sense. However, the second half saw a rejuvenated Liverpool intent on attack. Chances aplenty were created, but they mostly went begging. *—AP*

Real edges closer to title with a gritty win

MADRID, 27 APRIL



Real Sociedad's Sheraldo Becker (foreground) goes for a header *PHOTO: AFP*

Turkish teenager Arda Guler's strike helped Real Madrid close in on the Spanish title with a 1-0 win at Real Sociedad on Friday, moving 14 points clear at the top of La Liga. After last weekend's Clasico win over second-place Barcelona it appears a formality for Madrid to take the title back from their arch-rivals, and Guler helped them move one step closer. The playmaker, 19, has endured an injury-hit season but on his first league start snatched a heavily rotated Madrid side a tight victory at the Reale Arena.

Real Madrid coach Carlo Ancelotti rested virtually his entire first-choice team with Tuesday's Champions League semi-final visit to face Bayern Munich in mind.

Top scorer Jude Bellingham was on the bench after recovering from a stomach problem to earn a late addition to the squad list, alongside Vinicius Junior, Toni Kroos, and various other stars.

As a result, Madrid conjured little in attack beyond Guler's goal, with the hosts, sixth, on top in driving San Sebastian rain.

"Arda scored a goal, Arda will be an important player for us in the future, there's no doubt he'll be here next year," Ancelotti told reporters, also praising his team's commitment despite the rotations.

"It was quite clear that everyone thought we were coming here for a stroll, the only ones who didn't think so were the players," he continued. *—AP*